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*Presents to Mrs. F. Wright A 239
by W. Thompson p93 1838*

THE

THEOLOGICAL COMPENDIUM,

CONTAINING

SEVERAL DISSERTATIONS

ON SOME OF THE

GREAT DOCTRINES

AND

DUTIES OF RELIGION,

WHICH ARE MADE PLAIN

BY THEIR

PRIMARY EVIDENCES AND DEMONSTRATIONS :

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

A SKETCH

OF THE

DIFFERENT DENOMINATIONS OF CHRISTIANS

IN THE

KNOWN WORLD ;

Designed principally for the Benefit of Young Persons, and those
who have not Money to Purchase, nor Time to Read
elaborate and voluminous Works.

By JAMES PRIESTLEY.

" In every work regard the writer's end."

*" Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you
a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear."*

PETER.

HALIFAX, (N. S.)

Printed for the Author,

By ANTHONY H. HOLLAND.

1817.

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PREFACE.

IT is well known to many, that the late pious Dr. Porteus, Bishop of London, with a view of stemming more effectually the overwhelming torrent of infidel opinions, recommended to the clergy of his diocese, to draw out, from the whole body of christian evidences, the principal and most striking arguments, and to bring them down to the understandings of the common people.

In accordance with this salutary advice of the worthy Prelate, and with the same view of confronting anti-scriptural opinions and practices, and of defending the truth as it is in Jesus, the ensuing manual has been prepared for the press.

Some of the most momentous parts of the christian system, are here exhibited not only in familiar, but perspicuous language.

Here too the design of christianity is set forth in so small a compass, that, on one hand, it is not too concise, and on the other, it is entirely free from the tedium of prolixity.

However, the reader is admonished not to expect too much from a production of this nature. It is not designed as a full illustration, nor a copious vindication of *all* the important truths in the Christian Religion. To attempt this, would be at variance with the title page, and incompatible with the publisher's present circumstances. But it is hoped, that in this manual, some of the most important doctrines will be sufficiently elucidated, and certain duties explained, recommended, and enforced.

This is the more necessary because there are many who are deluded by the prevailing fashion, of taking up the most interesting gospel-truths on *trust*, without sufficiently investigating their grounds and reasons. Such persons are guilty of a culpable ascitancy, because the means of information are so plentifully diffused, that every man may possess, in his own mind, a rationale of the religion which he professes.

The publisher begs permission further to say, that he has de-

rived great assistance from several books now in circulation, and when he has thought it requisite to make quotations from any work or publication, he has generally preferred doing this in the author's own words.

The publisher, in the first instance, attempted to give the names of the authors, whose words he quoted; but afterwards he was of opinion, that this would considerably augment his labour without affording one substantial advantage to the reader.

Beside, in many cases it was difficult, and in a few impossible to ascertain, with any degree of certainty, whose words he was transcribing, especially as he, for the sake of expedition, frequently quoted from memory.

The publisher has frequently observed, in his travels thro' these Provinces, that the various opinions of different denominations of christians are either not known at all, or but imperfectly by the inhabitants. This ignorance is to be deplored, as a serious inconvenience. To effect its removal, as far as possible, there has been added a sketch of the different denominations of christians in the known world.

It may not be deemed superfluous in this place, to apprize the persons who may condescend to read this publication, that the publisher knows very well, that his motives will be variously construed by different persons. In justice to himself and for the satisfaction of all whom this may concern, he declares that he seeks no worldly emolument; he desires none. If the Father of the Universe should, by this humble attempt, be honoured, and any of his fellow creatures profited, he shall enjoy, in his own bosom, all the remuneration he seeks or desires.

J. PRIESTLEY.

HALIFAX, N. S. NOVEMBER, 1817.

N. B. Should this small volume meet with a favourable reception, it will probably be succeeded by others.

DISSERTATION I.

On the Being of a God.

THERE is one God contains the great truth which unquestionably is the foundation of all religion ; of all that we are to believe and to do ; of all our hopes, and all our fears ; of our consolation in this world, and our happiness in the next.

As to the term God, many attempts have been made to define it. Dr. *A. Clarke* observes that the word itself, is Anglo-saxon, and among our ancestors signified not only the Divine Being, now commonly designated by the word, but also *good*, as in their apprehension it appears, that God and good were co-relative terms ; and when they thought or spoke of him, they were doubtless led from the word itself, to consider him as *the good Being*, a fountain of infinite benevolence, and beneficence towards his creatures.

A general definition of this great first cause, as far as human words dare attempt one, may be thus given. The eternal, independent, and self-existent Being : He whose purposes and actions spring from himself, without foreign motive or influence : He who is absolute in dominion ; the most pure, the most simple, and most spiritual of all Essences : infinitely benevolent, beneficent, true and holy : the cause of all being, the upholder of all things : infinitely happy, because infinitely perfect ; and eternally self-sufficient, needing nothing that he has made. Illimitable in his immensity, inconceivable in his mode of existence, and indescribable in his essence. Known fully only to himself, because an infinite mind can be fully apprehended only by itself. In a word, a Being who, from his infinite wisdom,

cannot err or be deceived ; and who, from his infinite goodness can do nothing but what is eternally just, right, and kind. (a)

He who attempts to persuade himself that there is no God, must have a creed that is equally absurd, uncomfortable, and contradictory ; the verity of this remark will appear, from the following account of the *Atheist's Creed*, drawn up by Archbishop Tillotson. The Atheist believes that there is no God, nor possibly can be ; and consequently that the wise as well as the unwise of all ages have been mistaken, except himself and a few more. He believes that either all the world have been frightened with an apparition of their own fancy, or that they have most unnaturally conspired together to cozen themselves ; or that the notion of a God is a trick of policy, though the greatest princes and politicians do not at this day know so much, nor have done time out of mind. He believes that either the Heavens and the Earth, and all things in them, had no original cause of their being, or else that they were made by chance, and happened, he knows not how, to be as they are ; and that in this last shuffling of matter, all things have, by great good fortune, fallen out as happily and as regularly, as if the greatest wisdom had contrived them ; but yet he is resolved to believe that there is no wisdom in the contrivance of them. He believes that matter of itself is utterly void of all sense, understanding and liberty ; but for all that he is of opinion, that the parts of matter may now and then happen to be so conveniently disposed as to have all these qualities, and most dexterously to perform all those fine and free operations which we attribute to spirits. Such is the *Atheist's Creed*, from whence we learn that he must be weak, credulous, and absurd.

Of all principles, that of Atheism is the most incongruous to the nature of man, and the most inimical to true happiness. Without the belief of a God, and the hope of immortality, the miseries of human life would often be in-

(a) Dr. A. Clarke's Note on Genesis Chap. I. v. 1.

supportable. Influenced by this sentiment, I believe, it will not be superfluous to bring forward a few observations in defence of an opinion, that has afforded unspeakably great consolation to the learned and unlearned.

The belief of this leading article, the being of a God, is principally founded, on the truth and authority of the Sacred Scriptures; yet it is not more certain that this wonderful frame of the heavens and of the earth exists, than that a Supreme infinite Wisdom and Power must be the First Cause and Prime Author of them, it being utterly impossible they could otherwise have been.

That there has been from all eternity some original, necessary, self-existent Being, is a position that cannot be refuted. Somewhat or other must have always existed, or else there never would have been any thing; for that which once was not, could not produce itself. Since something now is, it is manifest something always was, otherwise the things that now are must have been produced by nothing, that is not produced at all, since *nothing* cannot be a cause. Most assuredly there never was a time in which nothing existed, because that condition must have continued. The universal *blank* must have remained; nothing could ever have existed since, nothing could exist now. Now this eternal SOMETHING must be self-existent, that is, it must contain in itself a reason, why it does exist rather than not exist, a foundation upon which its existence relies, some internal cause of existence, that renders its non existence impossible, and its existence necessary. Something therefore must always have been of itself, or did necessarily exist, still is, and ever will be; and that *first cause* is called God.

It is not necessary, at present, to inquire whether the idea of God be innate or not; it is sufficient, that, if we attend to and duly consider the evidences which are abundantly afforded us, we shall most certainly and satisfactorily attain the knowledge of his existence. All nature so clearly points out and so loudly proclaims a Being of Almighty Power, infinite wisdom, and unbounded goodness, that whoever hears not his voice, and sees not its proofs,

may well be thought wilfully deaf and obstinately blind. If it be self-evident, to every man of thought, that there can be no effect without a cause, what shall we say of that manifold combination of effects, that series of operations, that system of wonders, which fill the universe; and, presenting themselves to all the powers of perception, strike our intellect and our senses on every side?

God has made himself in a manner visible by this material world, where we may observe such an exquisite order and correspondence of all its several parts, that nothing appears insulted, but all things are in a line of mutual respect, which evidently runs through the whole creation. Consider man, who himself is a proof of God's existence. Let us place him before us in his full stature. We are at once impressed with the beautiful organization of his body, with the orderly and harmonious arrangement of his members. Such is the disposition of these, that their motion is the most easy, graceful, and useful, that can be conceived. We are astonished to see the same simple matter diversified into so many different substances, of different qualities, size and figure. This wonderful machine the human body, is animated, cherished, and preserved, by a spirit within, which pervades every particle, feels in every organ, warns us of danger, and administers to our pleasures.

Whence came this erect, orderly, beautiful constitution of the human body? Did it spring up from the earth self-formed? Surely not. Earth itself is inactive matter. That which has no motion can never produce any. Man could not, as has been vainly supposed, have been formed by the mere concurrence of atoms. We behold the most exact order in the human body. Order always involves design. Design always involves intelligence. That intelligence which directed the orderly formation of the human body, must have resided in a being, whose power was adequate to the production of such an effect. Creation surely is the prerogative of a self-existent, uncaused being. Finite creatures may arrange and dispose, but they cannot create. It is a universal law through all nature, that like produces like. We have therefore no reason to

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suppose, that man was formed either by himself or mere accident. If, in the latter way why do we not see men formed so at the present day? Why do we never see the clods brightening into human flesh; and the dust under our feet, crawling into animated forms, and starting up into life and intelligence. There must therefore be a God, uncaused, independent and complete. The nobler part of man clearly evinces this great truth. When we consider the boundless desires and the unconceivable activity of the soul of man, we can refer his origin to nothing but God.

By history, the human soul can assemble all the preceding ages; and by prophecy, anticipate the future: it can converse with an immensity of objects, and draw conclusion from each; and yet, this amazing soul is no more than a *finite* being, circumscribed in all its powers. Who but he, in whose sight, all worlds of beings are as nothing, could thus limit and proportion the powers of man!

"Let us turn from man to the world we inhabit."—

The diversification of its surface into land and water, islands and lakes, springs and rivers, hills and vallies, mountains and plains, renders it doubly enchanting. We are entertained with an agreeable variety, without being disgusted by a tedious uniformity. Every thing seems admirably formed for our profit and delight. There the vallies are cloathed in smiling green, and the plains are bending with corn. Here is the gentle hill to delight the eye, and beyond, slow rising from the earth swells the huge mountain, and with all its load of waters, rocks, and woods, heaves itself up into the skies. From the mountains descend the streams to fertilize the plains below and cover them with wealth and beauty. Who covered the earth with such a pleasing variety of fruits and flowers. Who gave them their delightful fragrance, and painted them with such exquisite colours? Who causes the same water to whiten in the lily, that blushes in the rose?—God.

But how are we astonished to behold the vast ocean rolling its vast burthen of waters! Who gave it such a configuration of particles, as to render it movable by the least pressure, and at the same time so strong as to support its

heaviest weights? Who gave it its regular motion? Who confined it within its bounds? A little more motion would disorder the whole world! A small incitement on the tide would drown whole kingdoms. Who restrains the proud waves when the tempest lifts them to the clouds? Who measured the great waters and subjects them to invariable laws? That great Being, "who placed the sand for a bound thereof, by a perpetual decree that it cannot pass; and though the waves thereof toss themselves; yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet they cannot pass over."

Passing by the numerous productions and appendages of the earth, let us rise from it, and consider the body of air, with which we are surrounded. What a convincing proof do we here find of the existence of God! Such is the subtilty and transparency of the air, that it receives the rays of the sun and stars, conveying them with inconceivable velocity to objects on the earth, rendering them visible and decorating the whole surface of the Globe with an agreeable intermixture of light, shades, and colours. But still this air has a sufficient consistency and strength to support clouds, and all the winged inhabitants. Had it been less subtile, it would have intercepted light. Had it been more rarified, it would not have supported its inhabitants nor have supported sufficient moisture for the purposes of respiration. What then but infinite wisdom could have tempered the air so nicely, as to give it sufficient strength to support clouds for rain, to afford wind for health, and at the same time to possess the power of conveying sound and light?

But when we cast our eyes up to the firmament of heaven, we clearly see that it declares God's handy work. Here the immense theatre of God's works opens upon us, and discloses ten thousand magnificent splendid objects.—We dwindle into nothing in comparison with this august scene of beauty, majesty, and glory. Who reared this vast arch over our heads? Who adorned it with so many shining objects, placed at such immense distances from each other, regular in their motions, invariably observing the laws to which they were originally subjected? Who placed the

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sun at such a convenient distance as not to annoy but refresh us? Who for so many ages has caused him to rise and set at fixed times? Whose hand directs and whose power restrains him in his course, causing him to produce the agreeable changes of day and night, as well as the variety of the seasons? Yes,

Part of thy name divinely stands,
On all thy creatures writ,
They shew they labour of thy hands,
Or impress of thy feet.

The order, harmony, and regularity of the revolutions of the heavenly bodies, are such incontestible proofs of the existence of God, that an eminent Poet well said, "An undevout astronomer is mad." In the time of *Cicero*, when the knowledge of astronomy was very imperfect, he did not hesitate to declare, that in his opinion the man who asserted the heavenly bodies were not framed and moved by a divine understanding, was himself void of understanding. Every plant, every atom, as well as every star, bears witness to a deity. Who ever saw statues, or pictures, but concluded there have been a statuary and a limner. All things that are, demonstrate something from whence they are. A man may as well doubt whether there be a Sun, when he sees his beams gilding the earth, as doubt whether there be a God, when he sees his works. Can we behold the spiders' nests, or silk-worms' web, the bees' closets, or the ants' granaries, without acknowledging a higher being than a creature, who hath planted that genius in them. From all these things we may as clearly infer design and wisdom about the contrivance of any finite understanding, as we may infer the ingenuity of an artificer, from the mechanism of a watch, or any other well-constructed machine.

In the creation a harmony subsists among things in their own nature dissimilar, and even destructive to each other; hence also we must acknowledge an infinitely wise mind, and almighty hand, in supporting this system, or totally abandon our reason; and there is no need of extraordinary miracles to confirm what the whole constitution of nature loudly and continually proclaims.

The universal consent of mankind, in all ages, to the existence of God^(b) may be fairly alleged, and demonstrates, their high prerogative above inferior animals. It is true the heathens worshipped innumerable divinities, yet on emergencies, or when surprised by some sudden calamity, they would exclaim, "O the great God." Hence it is presumed, considering the diversity of their mythology, that they could not have been so unanimous in these exclamations, had not God impressed a conviction of his being on every bosom. So that, as Archbishop LEIGHTON says, It is not improbable that those few among the *Greeks* who were called Atheists, had not that epithet because they absolutely denied the being of God, but only because they rejected, and justly laughed at the fictitious and ridiculous deities of the nations.

Or if it be true, what some travellers have asserted, that certain tribes of Indians have been discovered, who have no idea whatever of a Supreme Being, and no rights of religious worship; or even granting there are Atheists in opinion in countries professing Christianity, it does not follow that the belief of a Deity is not, in one sense, universal. For by all men, we must understand those in whom the sense of nature is not perverted, or those who do not abuse their reason, nor misimprove the opportunities with which they are favoured. And shall the practical atheism of some untutored Indians, and the contradiction of speculative Atheists, bribed by their passions, invalidate the consentient testimony of mankind? The necessity of faith in a Deity is such, that without it the state of the world could not *morally* subsist, nor any piety or justice, subordination or social order, be found in it; "So necessary is it that he should be, whose non-existence is impossible." The certainty of a prophetic light, given to men, of future events, and the truth of miracles, are points as well established, as to satisfy the judgment of all impartial inquirers. But the one is the exclusive prerogative of all-com-

(b) This was the opinion of Aristotle, Plato, Cicero, Plutarch, &c. as well as all the wiser philosophers.

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prehending wisdom, the other is a work of omnipotent power : Such a prodigy, therefore, as a professed atheist, can have no more claim to be considered as a rational being, than the greatest monster in nature to be looked upon as a true man.

If God can be seen in creation, study the creatures; the creatures are the heralds of God's glory. The world is a sacred temple, man is introduced to contemplate it. As grace does not destroy nature, so the book of redemption does not blot out the book of creation. Read nature ; nature is a friend to truth.

If it be a folly to deny, or doubt, the being of God, is it not a folly also not to worship him, when we acknowledge his existence ?

To fear God and keep his commandments is the whole duty of man. We are not reasonable if we are not religious. Because religion is our reasonable service.

If it be absurd to deny the existence of God, will it not be our wisdom, since we acknowledge his being, often to think of him. It is the black work of a fool, "God is not in all his thoughts."

If we believe the being of a God, let us abhor practical atheism. Actions speak louder than words. In St. Paul's days there were some of whom he says, " They profess that they know God ; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate." Tit. i. 16. Men's practices are the best indexes to their principles ; Therefore, " Let your light shine before men." Thus you shall be enabled to adore his exalted majesty, with an enlightened and humble reverence. You shall praise him with a grateful heart, and imitate him in all his works of holiness and truth.

B

DISSERTATION II.

On the Attributes of God.

Prefatory Observations on the Attributes of GOD.

The attributes of God are frequently divided into two distinct classes ; the former of these we call *essential attributes*, and the latter we denominate moral. In the former class we include his Omnipotence, his Immensity, his Immutability, his Omniscience, and his Eternity ; and in the latter, we include his Holiness, his Justice, his Goodness, his Mercy, and his Love.

This mode of dividing the Attributes of God, though just in itself, is certainly liable to misconception, and perhaps, these misconceptions have frequently been placed in an injurious light.

The division of these attributes of Deity, which has been above stated, seems, by denominating the former class "*essential attributes*," to imply, that the latter are not essential to God ; but, that they existed in an arbitrary manner, and could be dispensed with at pleasure. But this, without doubt, is an erroneous notion. It commences an attack upon these attributes, which we denominate essential, and in fact, tends to Atheism.

Every attribute which belongs to God, is essential to him ; by what name soever it may be known, in the languages of mankind. And we can no more conceive, that God can exist without his Justice, his Holiness, his Goodness, his Mercy, his Love, than we can conceive that he can exist without any of those attributes, which we denominate *essential*. Let us only suppose for a moment, that either of these attributes were to be annihilated ; into what a dreadful abyss should we immediately plunge ourselves ! If Justice were destroyed, we must have a God unjust. If his goodness were destroyed, he could confer no favours. If his Holiness were destroyed, he could possess no purity ; and if either his Mercy or his Love were destroyed, he could not possibly possess all possible perfection. That being,

therefore, which could be destitute of any perfection could not be infinite; and, consequently, all those attributes which we denominate *essential*, would immediately be found inapplicable to God. On these accounts, we are under a necessity of concluding, that those attributes which we denominate *moral*, must be as inseparable from the divine nature, as those are which we denominate *essential*. And we can no more conceive that the Deity can exist without the one, than that he can exist without the other; without involving ourselves in difficulties, from which we shall not be able to escape.

The reason, in all probability, why the attributes of God were thus distinguished by the appellations of *essential* and *moral*, was, that they might be better accommodated to the condition and to the understanding of man. In this view, the attributes which we perceive in God, are evidently distinguished from one another. The former class is evidently incommunicable to any finite being whatsoever; because finite would then become infinite. But the latter class God has been pleased to communicate to created beings, in a limited manner. These moral excellencies are now possessed by angels; they were once possessed by man, and will be inseparable from the spirits of just men, made perfect, through eternity; and will render themselves visible as far as that condition of being can give them an opportunity of operating, for ever.

In the present condition of human nature, the case, however is otherwise. The former class of the divine attributes we are assured, can never be communicated to any creature; and the latter, though communicated, has been unhappily lost. We are now awfully convinced, that those attributes which we have denominated *moral*, are by no means inseparable from man. They are communications from God, which apply to our moral conduct, and they are intimately connected with our *manner* of existence hereafter, without interfering with existence itself. Hence, then, I presume they have been denominated *moral attributes*, in God, because in a moral view they apply to man,

and are intimately connected with his happiness or misery, when time shall commence eternity.

But though with man those moral attributes have been totally lost ; it does not follow that they can be lost with God. He is a being of infinite perfection, and on that account can never be destitute of *moral perfection*—it is absurd, nay, it is impious in the highest degree to suppose it. The conclusion, therefore, appears at once both fair and inevitable, that the moral perfections are as inseparable from his nature, as those attributes are which we have denominated essential. And we have no more conception that either of these moral excellencies of God can be taken from him, his infinite perfections and existence still remaining, than we can conceive, that *immensity* can have limits, or that omnipotence can lose its power.

CHAP. I.

On the Eternity of God.

ETERNITY, with respect to God, is a duration without beginning or end. It is a duration that excludes all number and computation: days, months, and years, yea, and ages, are lost in it, like drops in the ocean ; Millions of millions of years, as many years as there are sands on the sea-shore or particles of dust in the globe of earth, and those multiplied to the highest reach of number, all these are nothing to eternity. They do not bear the least imaginable proportion to it, for these will come to an end, as certainly as a day ; but eternity will never, never, come to an end ! It is a line without end ! it is an ocean without a shore ! Alas ! what shall I say of it ? it is an infinite, unknown something, that neither human thought can grasp, nor human language describe !

Eternity is a negative attribute, and is a denying of God any measure of time, as immensity is a denying him any bounds of space ; as immensity is the *diffusion* of his essence, so eternity is the *duration* of his essence.

God is without beginning. In the beginning God created the world." Time signifies duration measured by the revolutions of the heavenly bodies ; but prior to the creation of these bodies, there could be no measurement of duration, and consequently no time; therefore, in this place, the words must necessarily mean the commencement of time which followed, or rather was produced by God's creative acts, as an effect follows, or is produced by a cause. God was then before the beginning of the world, and consequently before the commencement of time ; and what point can be set wherein God began to be, if he was before the beginning of created things ! Whatsoever number of years we can imagine before the creation of the world ; yet God was infinitely before these.

God is without end. He always was, always is, and always will be what he is, he remains always the same in being; so far from any change that no shadow of it can touch him, Jas. i. 17. "The Lord shall endure for ever." As it was impossible that he should not be, being from all eternity ; so it is impossible that he should not be to all eternity. That which had no beginning of duration can never have an end, nor any interruptions in it. Since God never depended upon any, what should make him cease to be what eternally he hath been, or put a stop to the continuance of his perfections. Whenever, therefore, we read in scripture of God's repenting, and the like, it is not to be understood of any alteration in him ; but all such expressions are to be understood with relation to his outward dispensations. All those affections of love, joy, grief, and hatred, that are ascribed to God : these are not properly affections, that take their turns in his heart, as they do in ours ; but they are the expressions of the agreeableness or disagreeableness of persons and things to his holy nature.

God does not only always remain in being, but he always remains the same in that being. The creatures are in a perpetual flux ; something is acquired, or something lost every day. A man is the same in regard of his existence, when he is a man, as when he was a child ; but there is a new succession of quantities and qualities in him.

And this unchangeable existence or eternity, is not derived, nor at the disposal of any other, but he possesses it by nature and essence. The eternity of God is nothing else but the duration of God; and the duration of God is nothing but his existence enduring. Therefore when years are ascribed to him, we are to consider it as a mode of expression, which God uses, in order to accommodate himself to our finite capacities; for it would be absurd to conceive that God is bounded, or measured by time.

This doctrine inspires the pious with great consolation. Without admitting the truth of it, what foundation of comfort could we have in any of God's attributes! Though God be merciful, good, wise and faithful, yet if we believe that these perfections belong to a corruptible being, they would afford but imperfect reasons for confidence and peace. If we doubt God's eternity, we must also doubt the truth of his promises; but if we believe him to be the living God and steadfast forever, then we may rejoice in his omnipotence and power, being assured that he has ability to accomplish his promises and will be as good as his word.

Allowing the eternity of God, then what reason has the Church of Christ to fear her enemies? They may spring as the grass, but soon they will wither by their own inward principles of decay, or shall be cut down by the hand of God. They may threaten, but their breath may vanish as soon as their threatenings are pronounced. Shall the adversaries of the Church live forever? No. They shall vanish as a shadow. He that inhabits eternity, is above them that inhabit mortality, who must, whether they will or not, say to corruption, thou art my father, and to the worm, thou art my mother and sister."

CHAP. II.

God is a Spirit.

A Spirit is an incorporeal being or intelligence; in which sense God is a spirit. The spirituality of God is his im-

materially, or being without body. "But, perhaps God, who is spiritual in one part of his essence, may be corporeal in another." No; for, however admirable in man, that union may be, and those laws which unite his soul to his body, nothing more fully marks his weakness and dependence, and consequently nothing can less agree with the divine essence. If God be sometimes represented with feet, with hands, with eyes, these portraits are designed rather to give us emblems of his attributes, than images, properly speaking, of any parts which he possesseth. But there is a very just sense, in which it may be said, that the whole universe is the body of the Deity. In effect, as we call this portion of matter our body, which we move, act, and direct, as we please, so God actuates by his will every part of the universe. "He weighs the mountains in scales."

When we say that God is present in any place, let none suppose we mean, that he is actually contained therein; as if, when we say that God is in every place, we mean to assign to him a real and proper extension. Neither of these is designed. And whatever difficulty there may be in this system, there are greater difficulties in opposite opinions.

God is a Spirit is one of the first, greatest and most sublime, necessary truths in the compass of nature! "Who by searching can find out God!" We can easier say what he is not than what he is.

That there is but one God, is the concurring language of the genuine light of nature, and of scripture-revelation. The very same arguments by which we prove that there is a God, must, if perused, necessarily lead us into the thought that there can be no more Gods than one; for there can be but one necessarily existent Being; one first cause. Hence, though the rude, unthinking multitude among the pagans, were led, perhaps chiefly by the wild fictions of the poets, into the absurd notion of Gods many, and Lords many. Yet the soberer and wiser of their philosophers had their one Supreme God, and all the rest were looked upon as petty deities. It is notorious that Socrates fell a sacrifice to Athenian fury, for asserting the doctrine of one God. And it would be easy to shew, that we are still more abun-

dantly assured of this important doctrine by scripture-revelation.

When it is said that God is a spirit, we are to understand it as relating to the nature of God, and he is represented under this character, to heighten our thoughts of him.

God is an incorporeal Being. All corporeal beings consist of parts, and so are in their own nature capable of separation or dissolution, of alterations, additions, or diminutions, and of different figures, sizes, shapes, or forms; but all this argues composition and imperfection.

God can, by his infinite power, make what visible appearances he pleases, as he did in various forms, under the Old Testament, and at Christ's baptism and transfiguration in the New; but these were not appearances of the essence of God itself; they were only outward symbols, which he occasionally formed to notify his presence for special purposes; but as to his own nature, or essence he is the invisible God, whom no man has seen or can see.

Whenever we read of any representations of God, in scripture, as having eyes, ears; or as seeing hearing, we are by no means to imagine, that he hath such bodily organs, or acts by them; for "to whom will you liken God"!

From the preceding observations it follows, that all pretended images or pictures of God, are abominable and absurd! None can draw the figure of his own soul. How monstrously foolish then, must it be to offer any visible portraiture of the invisible God. It changes the truth of God into a lie, and degrades the glory of the incorruptible God into the likeness of corruptible creatures.

If God be a spirit, we ought to worship him in spirit and in truth. For this God can only be pleased with that which resembles himself: therefore he must hate sin and sinfulness, and can delight in those only, who are made partakers of his divine nature. With what serious attention, should we serve him; with what adoring reverence and profound humility should we ever think and speak of him! What a dreadful enemy and comfortable friend must God be! It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Who can stand before his indignation? But who

can appreciate the happiness resulting from having an interest in his favour? In his favour is life, and his loving kindness is better than life. The eternal God is his people's refuge; and if God be for us, who can be against us?

How thankfully should we embrace a gospel-revelation, which opens the way for a sinful creature's access to God, and acceptance with him through a Redeemer. In Christ we behold God as a Father of mercies, and a God of consolation.

CHAP. III.

The Omnipresence of God.

The omnipresence or ubiquity of God, is his being present in every place. This may be argued from his infinity; his power which is every where, &c.

The first idea of God's omnipresence is his omniscience. God is every where present, because he sees all. God's knowledge is incomprehensible: we cannot indeed comprehend how God knows all things, yet it is evident that he does; for to suppose otherwise is to suppose him an imperfect Being, and directly contrary to the Revelation he has given of himself.

We cannot evade God's notice. Darkness the most thick, distance the most immense, can conceal nothing from his knowledge. Soar to the utmost heights, fly to the remotest climates, wrap yourselves in the blackest darkness, every where you will be under his eye.

The knowledge of God is not a bare knowledge, his presence, it is accompanied with active knowledge. For instance, God observes all the effects of matter. He calls into being matter, without motion, and in some sense, without form. He gives this matter form and motion. He saw that a certain degree of motion, imparted to a certain portion of matter, would produce water; that another degree of motion communicated to another portion of matter,

would produce fire; that another would produce earth, and so of the rest.

When we consider our great demerit, it is not wonderful that we sometimes should be tempted to fear that we shall be forgotten in the immensity of God's works. But these doubts are removed, when we consider God as that glorious being who passes through, actuates, and supports the whole frame of nature. His creation, and every part of it, is full of him. There is nothing that he has made, that is either so distant, or so inconsiderable, which he does not essentially inhabit. His substance is within the substance of every thing, material, or immaterial, and as intimately present to it, as that being is to itself. In short, he is a Being whose centre is every where, and his circumference is no where.

He cannot but be conscious of every motion that arises in the whole material world, which he thus essentially pervades; and of every thought that is stirring in the intellectual world, to every part of which he is intimately united. So that infinite space is the *sensorium* of the Godhead. Brutes and men have their *sensoriola*, or little sensoriums, by which they apprehend the presence and perceive the actions of a few objects that lie contiguous to them.—*Their* knowledge and apprehension turn within a very narrow circle. But as God Almighty cannot but perceive and know every thing in which he resides, infinite space gives room to infinite knowledge, and is, as it were, an organ to omniscience.

Were the soul separate from the body, and with one glance of thought should start beyond the bounds of the creation; should it, for millions of years, continue its progress through infinite space with the same activity, it would still find itself within the embraces of its Creator, and encompassed round with the immensity of the Godhead.—In short, reason as well as revelation assures us, that he cannot be absent from us, notwithstanding he is undiscovered by us.

In this consideration of God's omnipresence and omniscience, every uncomfortable thought vanishes. He can.

not but regard every thing that has being, especially such of his creatures who fear they are not regarded by him.—For as it is impossible that he should overlook any of his creatures, so we may be confident that he regards, with an eye of mercy, those who, in unfeigned humility of heart, think themselves unworthy that he should be mindful of them.

Effects prove God to be every where—for every where life is sustained and given—and this is the work of God only : now if he be every where, what can be placed out of his sight ? Hence we read, “ Do I not fill Heaven and Earth ! saith the Lord ! ”

Beside, how could he judge the world in righteousness unless he were perfectly acquainted with all our doings ? He could not produce what he had never witnessed.

It is very pleasing to good men to consider that God dwells every where and knows all things. The meditation of a christian of an all-seeing God is sweet, and therefore it is frequent—he comes to the light, and instead of shunning scrutiny he invites it. If he be not right he wishes to be made right.

I know not, says the christian, what to pray for, but God always knows what to give. When he suffers under the suspicions of friends, or the reproaches of enemies, he rejoices that his witness is in Heaven, and his record on high.

To the wicked and incorrigible the reflection is awful.—Yes, what can be more awful than the thought—that God sees you rise in the morning, goes forth with you, observes you all day long—that you have passed under his eye from infancy to youth, and from youth to manhood—that he has beheld every plan you have formed, every bargain you have made—that he has observed not only actions but motives, not only words but thoughts, not only the evil you have committed but the evil you wished to commit, all the filthiness of your imaginations as well as of your lives—all the difficulties you have had to overcome in pursuing a sinful course, every check of conscience, every rebuke of providence—and has noticed not only the number but ag-

gravations of all your crimes. And what renders all this more dreadful is—he does not forget any thing he has seen—and all that he has seen he will publish before the whole world, and he will punish what he has seen *with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power.*

This doctrine is calculated to be useful. 1—As a check to sin; for can a person sin while he realizes this? Impossible. This would restrain us even from secret faults, and make us as pure in the closet as in the sanctuary.

—“O may these thoughts possess my breast,
Where'er I rove, where'er I rest;
Nor let my weaker passions dare
Consent to sin for God is there.”

2—Useful as a motive to virtue. The presence of one who is above us, and whom we highly esteem and reverence elevates our minds and refines our behaviour, we desire to act so as to gain approbation. One of the heathen philosophers therefore recommended his pupils as the best means to induce and enable them to behave worthily, to imagine that some very distinguished character was looking upon them. But what was the eye of Cato compared with the eye of Jehovah? 3—Useful as a reason of simplicity and godly sincerity. If we had to do with men only, a fair appearance might be sufficient; *but the Lord looketh to the heart.* Let us therefore banish all dissimulation, hypocrisy from our religious exercises.

CHAP. IV.

The Power of God.

The Power of God has been divided into absolute, ordinate or actual. But to these distinctions it is not necessary now to attend. The power of God, is that ability whereby he can bring to pass whatsoever he pleases; whatsoever his infinite wisdom can direct, and the unspotted purity of will resolve.

Perhaps it will not be deemed superfluous, in this place, to draw a line of distinction between the power and authority of God. I have already observed, that by the power of God, we understand that *ability* or *strength*, by which God performs whatsoever pleases him. By the authority of God, we understand the *right* that he hath to act what he pleaseth. Among men, strength and authority are two distinct things. A subject may be a giant, and be stronger than his prince, but he hath not the same authority. Worldly dominion may be seated, not in a brawny arm, but a sickly and infirm body. A greater strength may be settled in the servant, but a greater authority resides in the master. As God is Lord, he hath a right to enact ; as he is Almighty he hath a power to execute. His strength is the executive power belonging to his dominion.

The power of God gives activity to all the other perfections of his nature. As holiness is the beauty, so power is the life of his attributes in their exercise. God has a powerful wisdom to attain his ends without interruption, a powerful mercy to remove our misery ; a powerful justice to punish offenders ; a powerful truth to perform all his promises.

This power is originally in himself, in his nature. The power of princes is originally in their people, and only managed by their authority to command ; but the power of God is not derived from any thing without him, but essentially in himself. Power belongeth unto God ; and all the power that the creature possesses is derived from him.

Hence it follows, that the power of God is infinite. Nothing can be too difficult for his divine power to effect. He possesses a power which none can oppose. None can stay his hand.

God's power is manifest in creation, and in the preservation of this universe. It is by his power that the heavenly bodies have rolled in their spheres, and the tumultuous elements have persisted in their order. He holds the waters in the hollow of his hand, and weighs the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance ; and in him we live, move and have our being. It is no small argument of omnipo-

tence, to keep all the strings of nature in tune ; to wind them up for the pitch of harmony he intended ; and prevent those jarrings which would naturally result from their opposite qualities.

The power of God is evident in effecting his purposes by small means. As he magnifies his wisdom by using ignorant instruments, so he exalts his power by the weak. By the motion of Moses' rod he works wonders in the court of Pharaoh. The walls of Jericho falling at the sound of a ram's horn, was a more glorious display of the power of God, than if Joshua had battered them down by engines of war.

The power of God was strikingly manifested in the publication of the gospel, especially in the instruments which he chose for that arduous purpose. Men of low condition, meanly bred, so far from any splendid estates, that they possessed only their nets ; without credit or reputation in the world ; without comeliness or strength. Not the wise men of Greece, but the fishermen of Galilee, are employed to publish the gospel of Christ. Men without letters, arms, power, intrigues, human help, philosophy, and without eloquence, triumphed over the world with the sound of their voices. Idols fell, temples were demolished, oracles were struck dumb, the strongest inclinations of nature were diverted, people's ancient habits were changed, they flocked in crowds to adore Jesus ; whole provinces presented themselves at the foot of the Cross. This is the finger of God, nay, more, this is the out-stretched arm of Jehovah.

CHAP. V.

The Wisdom of God.

Wisdom is a transcendent excellency, of the divine nature : it is that grand attribute of his nature by which he knows and orders all things for the promotion of his glory and the good of his creatures. It is not necessary here to

shew, that in our conception there is a difference between wisdom and knowledge, though, by many, they have been confounded together.

The wisdom of God appears in the creation of the world. The whole creation is a poem, every species a stanza, and every individual creature a verse in it. This wisdom not only appears in the great variety of animals, plants and colours ; but in the fitness of every thing for its end. After the most diligent inspection, there can be found nothing unprofitable. The earth is fitted into parts ; the valleys are appointed for granaries, the mountains to shadow them ; the rivers like veins, carry refreshment. The sea is fitted for its use ; it is a fish-pond, for the nourishment of man ; it joins nations, &c. Showers are appointed to refresh the bodies, to open the womb of the earth, "to make it fruitful." Winds are fitted to purify the air, to carry the clouds, to refresh the earth. The trees are for the habitations of birds. The seasons have their uses. The days and nights have also their usefulness.

This wisdom appears farther, in the dispensations of his providence ; in the work of redemption ; in the government and preservation of his church in all ages, while the greatest cities have disappeared, and the best connected and formidable nations have been broken to pieces.

This subject should teach us the necessity of knowledge and wisdom. No man is obliged to know every thing ; this can neither be sought nor required, for it is utterly impossible ; yet persons are under some obligation to improve their own understanding, otherwise it will be a barren desert, or a forest overgrown with weeds and brambles. Universal ignorance, or infinite error, will overspread the mind which is utterly neglected and lies uncultivated. The advantages of religious knowledge are very great. It forms the basis of true honour and felicity. Not all the lustre of a noble birth ; not all the influence of wealth ; not all the pomp of titles, nor all the splendour of power, can give dignity to the soul that is destitute of inward improvement. By this we are allied to angels, and are capable of rising for ever in the scale of being. Such is its inherent worth,

that it hath always been represented under the most pleasing images. In particular, it hath been compared to light, the most valuable and reviving part of nature's works, and to that glorious luminary which is the most beautiful and transporting object our eyes behold. If we entertain any doubts concerning the intrinsic value of religious knowledge, let us look around us, and we shall be convinced how desirable it is to be acquainted with God, with spiritual, with eternal things. Observe the difference between a cultivated and barren country. While the former is a lovely, cheerful, and delightful sight, the other administers a spectacle of horror. As divine knowledge instructs in the way to endless bliss, so it will survive that mighty day, when all worldly literature and accomplishments shall forever cease. At that solemn period, in which the records and registers of men shall be destroyed, the systems of human policy be dissolved, and the grandest works of genius die; the wisdom which is spiritual and heavenly shall not only subsist, but be increased to an extent, that human nature cannot, in this present life, admit.

From the consideration of God's wisdom, we should be excited to ask wisdom of him. "If any man lack wisdom let him ask of God." Let this engage our greatest care, and most diligent application. There is hardly any thing of which men are more ambitious, than to be thought wise: it would be happy for them if they were as much concerned to obtain true wisdom. And of this wisdom the fear of the Lord is the beginning.

If God be wise, then it certainly becomes us to resign to his will, and acquiesce in his appointments—For,

God's choice is safer than our own ;
Of ages past inquire,
What is the most formidable fate ?
To have our own desire.

What can be more reasonable and safe, than that we leave him to govern the world who made it so wisely.

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CHAP. VI.

The Holiness of God.

The holiness of God is the purity and rectitude of his nature. It is an essential attribute of God. If any attribute have an excellency above the other perfections of his, it is this. None is sounded out so loftily, with such solemnity, and so frequently by angels, as this. Power is his hand and arm, omniscience his eye, eternity his duration, his holiness is his beauty.

God is essentially and absolutely holy. His holiness is necessary to his being. He is not only holy, but holiness; holiness, in the highest degree, is his sole prerogative.

Of consequence it follows, that God hates all sin. He abhors it necessarily, intensely, universally, perpetually. — And it follows also that God cannot encourage any to sin, or promote sin in any degree. No being can produce any thing which is not in itself. More properly, like always produces like. An evil tree cannot produce good fruit. A fountain cannot produce salt water and bitter. Light may sooner be the cause of darkness, than he that is the fountain of good, should be the source of evil. “Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God.” — James iii. 11. It is still more impossible that God should necessitate man to sin. Indeed sin cannot be committed by force; there is no sin but is in some sort voluntary.

The holiness of God is visible by his *works*; he made all things holy, Gen. i. 31. By his *providences*, all which are to promote holiness in the end, Heb. xii. 10. By his *grace*, which influences the subjects of it to be holy, Tit. ii. 10—12. By his *word*, which commands it, Pet. i. 15. By his *ordinances*, which he hath appointed for that end, Jer. xlv. 4, 5. By the *punishment* of sin in the death of Christ, Is. liii. and by the *eternal punishment* of it in wicked men, Matt. xxv. last verse, &c.

CHAP. VII.

The Goodness of God.

The notion of goodness is inseparable from the notion of God. We cannot own his existence, but we must also confess his goodness.

There is a goodness of being, which is the natural perfection of a thing ; there is the goodness of will, which is the holiness of a person ; there is the goodness of the hand, which we call liberality, or beneficence, or doing good to others. Now God is good in his being ; for all good meets in his essence, as all water meets in the ocean. Were he not good in himself, he could not be infinitely good and diffusive to us. Had not the sun a fullness of light in itself, and the sea a vastness of water, the one could not enrich the world with its beams, nor the other fill every creek with its waters.

The goodness of God is not the same with the holiness of God. The holiness of God is the rectitude of his nature. The goodness of God is the efflux of his will, whereby he is beneficial to his creatures.

The goodness of God is not the same with his mercy. Goodness extends to more objects than mercy ; goodness is extended to all the works of God's hand ; mercy is extended only to miserable objects. God's goodness is seen in all his creatures : Yea, in the inanimate creation, the sun, the earth, and all his works ; and in the government, support, and protection of the world at large. His special goodness relates to angels and saints. To angels, in creating, confirming, and making them what they are. To saints, in redemption, justification, adoption, &c.

This subject is matter of comfort in affliction. What can we fear from the conduct of infinite goodness ? God is so good that he cannot be insensible to our afflictions, nor will he forget to comfort us : "as one whom his mother comforteth so will I comfort you."

Can a fond mother from herself depart,
 Can she forget the darling of her heart?
 The little darling whom she bore and bred,
 Nurs'd on her knee and at her bosom fed?
 To whom she seem'd her every thought to give,
 And in whose life alone she seem'd to live.

Yes, she possibly may ; but God will not forget to supply the wants of those that fear and love him continually.

Let a view of God's goodness induce and encourage you to seek his favour. Thousands, millions have sought him—and none ever sought him in vain. These successful supplicants returning from his throne encourage us to go forward, all saying, *I sought the Lord and he heard me and delivered me from all my fears. They looked unto him and were lightened, and their faces were not ashamed. This poor man cried unto the Lord and he heard, and saved him out of all his troubles.—O taste and see that the Lord is good ;—blessed is the man that trusteth in him.*

Imitate God's goodness. "Do good to them that hate you, that you may be the children of your Father, which is in heaven." *Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.* And *He who went about doing good, and who has commanded us all to go and do likewise, He will not forget your labour of love ; but when he shall come from heaven, with the voice of the archangel, will say unto you, Well done, good and faithful servants, you have been faithful over a few things, I will make rulers over many, Enter ye into the joy of your Lord.* Matt. xxv. 21.

DISSERTATION III.

CHAP. I.

*On the Authenticity of the inspired Writings.**"Nihil magnum sine afflatu divino."*

The Holy Scriptures, especially the New Testament contain the words of Eternal Life—The Bible "hath GOD for its Author—SALVATION for its End, and TRUTH, without any mixture of error, for its Matter." LOCKE.

SCRIPTURE is a word derived from the Latin *scriptura*, and in its original sense is of the same with *writing*, signifying any thing written. It is, however, commonly used to denote the writings of the Old and New Testaments, which are called sometimes the scriptures, sometimes the sacred or holy scriptures. These books are called the scriptures by way of eminence, as they are the most important of all writings. They are said to be holy or sacred on account of the sacred doctrines which they teach; and they are termed canonical, because, when their number and authenticity were ascertained, their names were inserted in ecclesiastical canons, to distinguish them from other books, which being of no authority, were kept out of sight, and therefore called *apocryphal*.

The Holy Scriptures are the word of God, they are the language and address of the universal Father to his children in this world, whom he hath endowed with rational faculties to hear and understand his voice.

No book can contain more evident marks of such a Revelation, than the Holy Scriptures, eminently so called, of which we are happily possessed. There we have the fullest and clearest account of the nature and perfections of God, far beyond what the world at best could have attained to, and far beyond what could, in the ordinary course of things, have been preserved through succeeding generations.

In the Scriptures any one, in common life, may not only very readily see that God is, but he sees what God is to us ; that as great as he is in himself, he is our God and Father, that he hath from his own immensity of being, given us being, a noble and distinguished kind of being ; that he constantly regards us, loveth us, interests himself in our affairs, is concerned for our welfare, is daily near us, the object of our trust and dependence ; that all our safety is in his favour, and that in his favour, and under his protection, we are infinitely safe and happy.

In the Holy Scriptures, any man of common sense may not only with ease, learn his duty in the fullest extent, but at the same time he may see that it is practicable, and may see how to engage in it ;—how ready and cheerful he should be in the discharge of it ;—how he ought to resist temptations,—to struggle with difficulties.

The word of God does not only contain simple propositions, declaring what we ought to do and be, but rules of life intermixed with the power and splendour of divine grace, working mightily to renew us into the Divine Nature. There religion appears in all its truth, lustre, sweetness, and majesty. There it is dressed in all its charms ; not as a sour, severe, morose, gloomy principle, forbidding enjoyment, and the parent only of sorrow, horror, and despair, but as our life, our glory, our peace, our joy ; as giving us the truest relish and enjoyment of life, as the source of the most solid pleasure and comfort, as uniting us to God, as lodging us for ever in the almighty arms of his love and goodness, as leading us to, and preparing for endless joys and ineffable pleasures in his presence.

As to sin and wickedness, the learned tell us, that philosophers have said much concerning the odious nature of vice, that it is evil and the worst of evils, that it is the disease and deformity of the mind, hurtful to the health of the body, and ruinous to the reputation and estate. These reflections were so far just, but the benefit of them was confined to men of letters and study ; the vulgar received little or no advantage from them ; but in the scriptures the meanest minds are favoured with the greatest instructions,

every way superior to those which philosophers could possibly communicate. There sin is not only set forth in all its odious colours, and in all its pernicious effects, as to this present life, but its deadly nature is demonstrated as it stands in contrariety to God, as it is the transgression of his holy law, as it exposeth us to his displeasure, and disqualifies us for his blessing: as it is opposite to all the ends of our creation, and consequently as deserving of death.

There is another thing which ought not to be overlooked; the pardon of sin. Of this the wisest of the philosophers entertained but very imperfect notions. They very rarely considered it in its relation of dissonancy to the divine perfections, and therefore say little or nothing concerning the placableness of the Deity, whether God would pardon sin, or in what way his wisdom thought proper to do it. In truth they did not understand the demerit of sin, and therefore of course, must be in the dark as to the remission of it. But all these things are delineated in the Holy Writings, with so much perspicuity, that they are open and obvious to the weakest capacity; so that he who runs may read, and a way faring man needs not err in the things that so greatly concern him.

The forgiveness of injuries was a thing unknown, not only to the heathen philosophers, but to the wisest moralist, until it was taught by our Saviour and enforced by his example. Before this revenge was considered as an indisputable mark of a noble mind. But how much more magnanimous, how much more beneficial to mankind is forgiveness! It is more magnanimous because every gracious and exalted disposition of the human mind is requisite to the practice of it; and it is the most beneficial, because it puts an end to an eternal succession of injuries and retaliations. Let us therefore endeavour to cherish this noble disposition; let the bitterest enemy we have be softened by its effects; let us also see how friendly it is to our happiness, and how much it prevents the unhappiness of others. And in order to this, let us contemplate the example of our saviour. He lived and died almost under continual provocations, not only from his friends and followers, but

From all sorts of persons. He endured the most spiteful reproaches and injurious usage, and the most cruel persecutions and sufferings, from those whom he had endeavoured by all means to oblige. He endured the contradiction of sinners whom he came to save. And how did he demean himself under these provocations? With the greatest meekness and mildness imaginable, answering their bitterest reproaches and the most cruel usage, either with reasonings, or meek silence; that, by the reasonableness and meekness of his answers and carriage, he might either convince or mollify them! When his enemies charged him with the profanation of the Sabbath, he only reasons the matter fairly with them, asking them whether it *was lawful to do good*, or to do evil on the *Sabbath Day*? When they accused him of being a magician, and casting out devils by the prince of the devils; he convinces them by reason, that this was a malicious and groundless charge. In short, the whole life of our Saviour upon earth, exhibits one uninterrupted scene of forbearance and forgiveness;—let the reader go and do likewise.

Prior to the coming of our Saviour, how much the world was in the dark about a future state is well known; and what should we now know of it without a Divine Revelation? And it cannot be concealed from any one, who is ever so little acquainted with the gospel of Christ, how clearly the world to come is opened to us in the sacred volume. These things duly attended to will shew us the admirable excellency of the holy scriptures; that God's word is truth and able to make us rise unto salvation; and further do demonstrate, that it is our duty to be much in reading them.

It is worthy of observation, that the more humble and holy people are, the more they read, admire, and value the scriptures: and, on the contrary, the more self-conceited, worldly-minded, and wicked, the more they neglect, despise, and asperse them. The more, therefore, the holy volume is disregarded and unknown, the greater will be the prevalence of wickedness, ignorance, and the most degrading superstition.

In the tenth century, all the nations of Europe were enveloped in darkness, and this darkness was never fully dissipated for several succeeding centuries. Some who filled the highest offices and stations in the Church, could not so much as read, while others who pretended to be better scholars, and attempted to perform the public offices, committed the most egregious blunders.

About this time, books were so scarce in Spain, that one and the same copy of Bible, St Jerome's Epistles, and some volumes of Ecclesiastical Offices, and Martyrologies, often served several different monasteries; and in an inventory of the goods of John de Pontissara, bishop of Winchester, contained in his capital palace of Wulnesey, all the books which appeared are nothing more than parts of seventeen books on different sciences. Long after those days, when a book was bought, the affair was of so much importance, that it was customary to assemble persons of consequence and character, and to make a formal record that they were present; and the disputed property of a book often occasioned the most violent altercations. Consequently, the prices of books in the middle ages were excessive. In the year 1274, the price of the Bible with a commentary, *fairly written*, was thirty pounds! A most enormous sum! For in 1272, the pay of a labouring man in England, was only three-half-pence per day; so that such a work would have cost him more than fifteen years labour. No stronger proofs than these need be adduced of the degrading state of religion, at this time, and of the superstition, which reigned in that, and some of the following ages.

But now, the means of instruction are plentifully diffused, and the sacred volume is extensively circulated. Let us not undervalue our privileges, but adequately appreciate and improve them. And in order to evince that we do so, let us manifest a strict compliance with our Saviour's injunction *Search the Scriptures*. While others search the works of nature, and the laws of nations, let us search the infallible records of truth. Do we want wisdom to guide our steps through this dark world? Do we want consola-

tion in distress? Do we want to find bright examples of piety? Do we want rational amusement? Let us search the scriptures. Let us search them in our closets, where all is calm and still; in our families, that our children and servants may be instructed; and in the public assemblies of religious worship, that all may learn.

Thus while we search the scriptures we shall feed upon them, and grow up in the life of God. They will be a safe guide to a better state and a comfort by the way. Let us teach them to our children, and may both they and our children's children, read, understand, and obey the heavenly oracles. This advice will well accord with the sentiments of the humble and pious christian, in whatever station he may be placed.

These sentiments are not, as some have, erroneously supposed, peculiar to the illiterate. In running the mind along the list of serious and devout christians, and sincere as well as firm believers in divine revelation, such as Newton, Boyle, Locke, Hale, Milton, Boerhaave, and a multitude of others, deserve to be noticed, none of whom can be stigmatized with the epithets "illiterateness and enthusiasm." As to Newton, he was a christian. His mind burst forth from the fetters cast by nature upon our conceptions. Newton, whose science was truth, and the foundation of his knowledge was philosophy: not those visionary and arrogant presumptions, which too often usurp its name, but philosophy resting upon the basis of mathematics, which, like figures, cannot lie—Newton, who carried the line and rule to the utmost barriers of creation, and explored the principles by which, no doubt, all created matter is held together and exists.

As to Locke, he was a christian; to the highest pitch of adoration and devotion he was a christian. Locke, whose office was to detect the errors of thinking, by going up to the fountains of thought, and to direct into the proper track of reasoning, the devious mind of man, by shewing him its whole process, from the first perceptions of sense to the last conclusions of ratiocination, putting a

rein besides upon false opinion, by practical rules for the conduct of human judgment.

What shall be said of the great Mr. BOYLE, who looked into the organic structure of matter, even to the brute inanimate substances, on which the foot treads? Such a man must have been qualified to look up through *nature* to *nature's* God. And what was the result of his contemplation? It was the most confirmed and devout belief in the Holy Bible:—the Bible which has been, and will be, in all ages, a subject of the highest reverence and admiration.

But perhaps it may be said, that the christian fable is but the tale of the more ancient superstitions of the world, and may be easily detected by a proper understanding of the heathen mythologies. Did Milton understand these Mythologies? Were they not the subject of his immortal song? And though he was shut out from all recurrence to them, yet, he poured them forth from the stores of a memory, rich with all that man ever knew, and laid them in their order as the illustration of that real and exalted faith, the unquestionable source of that fervid genius, which cast a sort of shade upon all the other works of man;

“He past the bounds of flaming space,
Where angels tremble while they gaze.
He saw, till blasted with excess of light,
He closed his eyes in endless night,”

But it was the light of the body that was extinguished; the celestial light shone inward, and enabled him to justify the ways of God to man.

Yes, blessed be God,

“Piety has found

Friends in the friends of science and true prayer,
Has flowed from lips wet with astalian dews.
Such was thy wisdom, NEWTON, childlike sage!
Sagacious reader of the *Works* of God,
And in his *Word* sagacious. Such too thine,
Whose genius had angelic wings,
And fed on manna. And such thine in whom
Our *British* THEMIS gloried with just cause,
Immortal HALE! for deep discernment prais'd,
And sound integrity not more, than fam'd
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No wonder. What book is comparable with the Bible ? For most of the learning that is now in the world we are indebted to the *Bible*. To the same book we are also indebted for all the morality and religion which prevail among men. Nay, even the absurd tales and fables, which are found in the writings of the ancient Greeks and Romans, are nothing more than perversions of the several histories and characters recorded in the *Old Testament*.

The *Bible* should be read for its beauties. Sir W. JONES, in the *Asiatic Researches*, vol. 3d. page 402, observes, Theological inquiries are no part of my present subject ; but I cannot refrain from adding, that the collection of tracts, which we call from their excellence the *Scriptures*, contain independently of a divine origin, more true sublimity, more exquisite beauty, purer morality, more important history, and finer strains both of poetry and eloquence, than could be collected within the same compass from all other books that were ever composed in any age or in any idiom. The two parts, of which the *Scriptures* consist, are connected by a chain of compositions, which bear no resemblance in form or style to any that can be produced from the stores of *Grecian*, *Indian*, *Persian*, or even *Arabian* learning. The antiquity of those compositions no man doubts ; and the unrestrained application of them to events long subsequent to their publication, is a solid ground of belief, that they were genuine predictions and consequently *inspired*.

The following masonetical analysis of an anonymous English author, may perhaps amuse the reader. The author terms it the Old and New Testament dissected. It contains an enumeration of all the books, chapters, verses, words, and letters which occur in the English Bible and Apocrypha. It did, as some say, occupy three years of the author's life.

Books in the Old Testament,	39
Chapters,	929
Verses,	23,214
Words,	582,450
Letters,	2,728,100
In the New Testament, books,	27

Chapters,	260
Verses,	7,950
Words,	181,253
Letters,	838,380
In the Apocrypha, chapters,	183
Verses,	6081
Words,	152,185

The word *And* occurs in the Old Testament 35,543 times.

The same in the New Testament occurs 10,684 times.

The word *Jehovah* occurs 6,855 times.

The 21st verse of the 7th chap. of Ezra, has all the letters of the Alphabet.

Total number of Books, Chapters, and Verses, in the Old and New Testaments—

Books,	66
Chapters,	1,180
Verses,	31,173
Words,	773,692
Letters,	3,566,480

The following Synopsis of the times at which the writers of the New Testament wrote, will perhaps be acceptable, though the reader will please to take notice, that perfect accuracy cannot be expected.

Books in order of time.

When written.

	A. D.
Mathew,	41
Epistles to the Galatians,	49
1. Epistle to the Thessalonians,	51
2. Epistle to the Thessalonians,	51
Epistle to Titus,	56
1. Epistle to the Corinthians,	57
1. Epistle to Timothy,	57
2. Epistle to the Corinthians,	58
Epistle to the Romans,	59
Luke,	60
Epistle of James,	60
1. Epistle of Peter,	60
Epistle to the Ephesians, between	62 & 65
Epistle to the Colossians, between	62 & 65
Epistle to Philemon, between	62 & 65
Epistle to the Philippians, between	62 & 65
Acts of the Apostles,	63
Mark,	64
Epistle to the Hebrews,	64
2. Epistle of Peter,	64
Epistle of Jude, between	64 & 70

A.D.

2. Epistle to Timothy,	-	-	-	66
John's Gospel,	-	-	-	68 or 70
1. Epistle of St. John,	-	-	-	70
2. Do. Do.	-	-	-	80
3. Do. Do.	-	-	-	80
Revelation,	-	-	-	96 or 97

CHAP. II.

Comprehending a concise history of Revelation.

REVELATION, is that which makes known to us the will and ways of the most high God, the Father of the universe, the fountain of all being and happiness, upon whom we have a necessary dependence for life, for understanding, and knowledge, for being and enjoyment, at all times and in every respect ; for without him we cannot live, we cannot breathe, we can have no kind or degree of sense and understanding. This is true. And it is equally true, that the best and most beneficent of Beings, the greatest and the kindest of all Fathers, could have no other end or design in creating mankind, but his own glory, and their happiness.

The chief end of man must be to glorify and enjoy God forever ; for perfect goodness cannot be conceived to propose any lower end in making a creature so noble and excellent.

But then it is certain, both from the holiness of God, and the nature of an intelligent, rational being, that a character of holiness and virtue, of obedience, righteousness, or right conduct is necessary on our part, to our enjoyment of God, or our happiness in his favour and blessing. It is necessary that we love the great Author of our being, that

we pay him all due honour and obedience, that we are dutiful and submissive to his will, that we understand our dependence upon him, and what we have to expect from him, that we may be excited to gratitude and due improvement of his benefits.

But we cannot love honour and obey God unless we know him, and are acquainted with him; nor can we possibly have any knowledge, or understanding of any kind whatever, but what must come originally from God. Therefore, that God, our Father should instruct and teach his creatures, whom he has made for the highest and noblest ends, in those things which immediately relate to his glory and their happiness, is perfectly consonant to his goodness and love.

And that infinite wisdom, the Lord and Proprietor of all being, should have various ways of making known himself and his will to us, is also perfectly true. He produced a great variety of creatures with different powers and instincts in our world, by them to shew that he can bestow upon us any kind or degree of being; he has displayed his immense greatness, power, wisdom, and goodness in numberless glorious bodies which, by his hand, are perpetually rolled about us in the heavens. His continually providing for our subsistence, in a way which is quite out of our power, plainly demonstrates our absolute dependence upon him, and obligations to him. This is the book of nature spread before all nations, and legible to every understanding; in which every attentive mind may read the perfections of God; and some perhaps the main duties which we owe him. But to him who made our minds and is always intimate to them, there must be many other possible ways of making known his will to us; as by an audible voice, a vision, or secret impression upon our spirits. Therefore, to believe, that God at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake to the ancient fathers by the prophets, is believing a thing not only very possible, but reasonable and fitting.

And it is no improbable supposition, that in the earliest ages of the world, God should only communicate his will to pious men, and leave them to hand it down to others by

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tradition. For in those days the longevity of mankind favoured this manner of conveyance. With our grand-parent *Adam*, *Methuselah* lived 243 years; with *Methuselah*, *Shem* the son of *Noah* lived about 97 years; and with *Shem*, *Jacob*, the son of *Isaac*, the son of *Abraham*, lived 50 years, as appears from the history of *Genesis*. So that no more than three persons, *Methuselah*, *Shem*, and *Jacob*, were sufficient to hand down the knowledge and worship of God, from *Adam* to the time when the children of *Israel* went down into *Egypt*, that is through the space of 2238 years. But when the life of man was reduced to the narrow period of four-score years, and the world on all sides was fallen into various sorts of corruption, and idolatry, and ignorance of God generally, prevailed among the nations, tradition evidently ceased to be a safe means of conveyance.

It was then the Divine Wisdom judged it a proper time to erect a peculiar kingdom, church, or congregation in the world; and for its illumination gave the knowledge of his will and worship in writing, by the hand of his servant *Moses*, that by such writing, or scripture, divine truth might be more easily preserved, be further spread, and when lost, more easily restored. This must be acknowledged a wise and proper expedient. The great Jewish Legislator was followed by various other inspired writers, historical and prophetical, who flourished at different periods, from the time of *Moses* to that of *Malachi*, whose important prophecies concluded the canon of the Old Testament, about 415, or according to others 480 years before the birth of our Lord and Saviour *Jesus Christ*. The fullness of time having come, this glorious *Emmanuel* came into the world, opened a new dispensation, and all the treasures of the divine grace which before had not so clearly been made known to the church and people of God. And what he and his apostles taught is also committed to writing, and completes what is called the canon of Scripture.

CHAP. III.

Some objections which have been leveled against the Holy Bible, stated and refuted.

It is pretended—"to be quite needless, nature and reason being sufficient to direct any man in the plain way of his duty, without any supernatural assistance."

To this it may be answered—that in general, nature and reason are sufficient to direct any man in the way of his duty, so far as God, in his circumstances, expects duty from him. For God expects duty from every person, only in proportion to the light he enjoys, and to the talents he hath received. But the experience of all mankind shews that nature and reason, by themselves, will advance but a little way in the knowledge of divine things. It is impossible to make a fair and rational inquiry into the Pagan world, without perceiving that the whole frame of their religion to be the highest reproach of human nature, and that the very mysteries of their worship are so horrid and impure, as to need to be veiled from the common view of the world.

Men, in a land like ours, where, in spite of themselves, their nature and reason are enlightened and directed, in a considerable degree by Revelation, may talk of the perfection and sufficiency of nature and reason.

If we look into those nations, which are perfect strangers to Revelation, we shall find them grossly ignorant, of the Being, unity and perfections of God, the dispensations of his Providence, the proper honour and worship that are due to him, the prayers which we may address to his goodness, and the hopes which we may entertain of his acceptance. — They know nothing of the pardon of sin, the promises of God's mercy and blessing, nor of any thing belonging to the covenant of his love, the present privileges, or future glory of his kingdom. The resurrection from the dead, the day of judgment, the immortal life, which will be the reward of piety, and the death everlasting, which will be the

and lot of all the impenitently wicked, are things with which they are altogether, or in a great measure, unacquainted. But all these are great principles in religion, and of great force to purify our spirits, ennoble our minds, animate our hopes, and guard us against the influence of bodily appetites, and the violence of temptation.

And however others may fare, in a degree of darkness and ignorance, through the favourable allowance of God, yet surely every man's reason will tell him, that superior knowledge, and a more extensive view of the divine dispensations, is absolutely necessary to a higher degree of piety, comfort, obedience, and devotedness to God. What has been related, may be true, that some primitive mortals subsisted only upon acorns and water, in dens and caves; and we know, that still, there are some parts of the world where the naked inhabitants enjoy very few conveniences of life; but shall we therefore despise the blessings of agriculture, and the various accommodations which make life happy and comfortable, and say they are needless? Cloths, habitations, and various other accommodations are necessary to our kind of life in the natural world; and so is Revelation to a corresponding degree of spiritual life. The food, raiment, and habitations which we enjoy are the gifts of God's goodness, and it is our duty to accept and use them with thankfulness. In like manner, Revelation is the gift of God, and, as such it ought to be received; and as it gives great light, we are obliged to attend to it accordingly, because we must, in the nature of things, be accountable for it.

However nature and reason, in their pure and most perfect state, might be sufficient to direct in the way of duty, yet when nature is corrupted, and reason obscured, or almost quite extinguished, they are by no means sufficient to restore and recover themselves to the knowledge and obedience of the truth; because they who should be physician to heal themselves, are sick and disabled. But it was the primary intention of God, in giving us the Revelation of his will, to restore and preserve the knowledge of himself in a corrupt and degenerate world.

So that Revelation is not only needful, but a very great blessing to mankind.

It may be said—"If this blessing were given to all mankind, who all equally stand in need of it; but whereas it is confined only to a part of mankind, while others are left to grope in the dark, how can it be accounted the gift of divine goodness? For is not God the Father of all men? How then can it be consistent with his beneficence, to confine the light of revelation to *SOME*, which would so *much* contribute to the happiness of *ALL*? May we not then conclude, that a partial revelation is no revelation from God?"

I answer—It is very certain that God is the Saviour of all, that he is good to all, and that his tender mercies are over all his works. But while we are sure of this, we are not equally sure that our reason is a perfect rule for adjusting the distribution of his benefits. On the other hand, we may be very sure that it is not. From the lowest to the highest degree of existence, from a grain of sand, to the most glorious angel in heaven, every kind of higher degree of being is an incontestible proof, that God may very justly according to his own wisdom and good pleasure, bestow what gifts, endowments, and privileges upon his creatures he sees fit. So that though as a *judge* he be no respecter of persons; yet, as a *benefactor* he is. He is debtor to none, therefore, his dispensations are not to be censured by our narrow and imperfect judgments. We may as well make an objection against the goodness of divine providence, that all men are not rich alike, wise alike, or knowing and learned alike.

Would you not think him a very foolish man, who should be displeased, that God has made him rich, and placed him in easy circumstances, because there are many about him in a poor, low condition? Who refuses wealth, or objects against plenty, because his neighbours are pinched, and make but a hard shift to get a living? Or who can be so absurd as to reckon his superior knowledge and learning of no real advantage, because there are numbers of illiterate persons, who are much below him in understanding? Or that the possession of reason is no blessing, because there are so

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many idiots among mankind? And is it not as absurd to deny revelation, or to argue against it as improperly bestowed, and unworthy of the divine goodness, because it is not communicated to all the world as well as ourselves? It is very unnatural to dispute against God's goodness in any shape, and very presumptuous to direct him how to bestow it either as to quantity, quality, or extent. If it is a fact, that he has given us any blessing, our duty surely is to be thankful, and to enjoy and improve it, whether he have bestowed more or less upon our fellow-creatures; being certain where less is given, less will be required; and that the judge of the whole earth, will, in the last day, deal with all in perfect equity and goodness. But,

"If Revelation is such a blessing, surely it would appear in the fruits or effects of it. Whereas great numbers, if not the generality of those who enjoy Revelation, are as bad as the very heathen, who are strangers to it. And such evils have been produced, such variance, discord, and bloody persecutions, on account of revealed religion, that it may justly be questioned, whether it has not done more harm than good. What reason then have we to say, it is a valuable gift, or worthy of the Father of the universe."

To this I reply—That *natural* causes by a sort of necessity produce their proper effects; so fire always burns combustible matter, and a good medicine heals a disease; and that is no fire which will not burn proper matter, nor that a good medicine which never heals a disease. But *moral* causes are of a different nature, because *their* efficacy depends upon the choice and disposition of the subjects to whom they are applied. And therefore a moral means or cause, may be itself most excellent, though it happens to produce no good effect; nay, though accidentally it may prove the occasion of very bad effects. Our Lord's ministry and doctrine were perfectly divine, and yet it had but small influence for good, upon the Jewish nation; nay, on the other hand, excited their malice to that degree, that they slew the prince of life and glory.

Whatever effects therefore, Revelation may have produced in the world, still it is true that it is a valuable gift, and

worthy of the divine goodness. But it must ever be remembered, that it is absolutely necessary to our receiving any benefit from gospel means, that we be truly desirous to shake off the yoke of sin, and to cultivate and improve our minds in piety and true holiness. But if we choose to live in ignorance, unbelief, or any branch of impiety or wickedness ; if our hearts are so attached to the world, so engrossed by business, sensual pleasures, and amusements, that we can spare no time for serious reflection, for God, our souls, and a future world, I cannot see how we should be saved by any grace, which the gospel has provided in Jesus Christ.

It is certain, the gospel hath produced many good effects, and will always do so, when it is received and attended to. Some of these will be mentioned hereafter. But it is as notorious as it is lamentable, that many pretended Christians make it the occasion of variance, hatred, and persecution ; we cannot, however, with any justice or propriety say, that *they* do receive or attend to Revelation, nay, it is certain, that in fact, they do not.

“ But can we be sure, that we have *now* in possession, those very books entire and perfect, in which Revelation was originally recorded ? May they not in length of time be lost, or quite altered from what they were at first ? Or so varied and changed by transcribers and translators that we can never be sure that we have the true and genuine sense of Scripture” ?

I ANSWER—No nation in the world, can be more sure of any of their public records and acts, preserved in their archives with the utmost care, than we are of the truth of the Scriptures now in our hands. The Jews preserved the books of Moses as the laws of their kingdom, in the most sacred parts of their tabernacle and temple ; those books, the Psalms and Prophets, were every where publicly read in their synagogues, every week on the Sabbath day ; their learned men, with the utmost exactness and scrupulosity, inspected, and guarded the text, even so far as to count the very number of letters in every book. In short, our Lord and the apostles frequently quote *Moses*, the *Psalms*

and *Prophets*, without any intimation that those books, were in any respect altered or depraved. Whereas had they indeed been corrupted, we need not doubt but our blessed Saviour, would have reformed that as well as, or rather more than any other instance of corruption among the Jews.

From our Lord's time, the Scriptures of the Old Testament were publicly read among the Jews in all parts of the world; and those scriptures, and the apostolic writings, as they came out, were read by christians every where in their assemblies, and dispersed over all the world, where the religion of Jesus was professed; as containing the laws and rules of the Religion which he taught. Insomuch that it was impossible to corrupt and deprave them.

And as for transcribers, or translators, it is for the same reason, impossible they should make any material alterations. And it is in fact true that they have not. For you may take any translation, in any language, or by any party among christians, Papists as well as Protestants, and you will find that they all agree in all things relating to the covenant of the Lord our God, and the several duties to which we are thereby obliged, though they may differ in some things, and commentators may put their own sense upon others. But I am well satisfied that they have been preserved pure and entire in every translation, from the beginning to this day.

Transcribers may indeed make literal mistakes, but those are easily corrected by a variety of manuscripts; and translators may differ in giving the literal sense of some words and phrases, but not so as to render it either obscure or uncertain. The more perfect, and exact in all things, any translation is, the better it is; but I am very sure, that all things pertaining to the dispensations of God, his grace and promises, and our hopes and duty, have been preserved pure and entire in every translation, from the beginning to this day. And this is abundantly enough for our instruction, comfort, edification, and direction.

It is well known, that gentlemen, in foreign business, who do not understand foreign languages, are obliged to carry it on by the help of translations. And if a letter in

Italian, German, Spanish, or French, were put into the hands of twenty translators, it is probable that every translation would differ, more or less, in some expressions. The same words or phrases would hardly be rendered in the same manner by every one of the translators ; and yet they might all agree with respect to the sense of the merchant. And that being all the correspondent wants to understand, he will never think it worth his while, to enter into minute particulars, or a critical propriety of phrases, which have nothing to do with his business. Just so it is with reference to the translation of the Bible. During the space of a great number of years, learning may have received considerable improvements, and by that means some inaccuracies may be found in a translation, about two hundred years old. But you may rest fully satisfied that as our English translation is, in itself, by far the most excellent book in our language, so it is a pure and plentiful fountain of divine knowledge, giving a true, clear, and full account of the divine dispensations.

“ But how comes it to pass, that learned men differ so much about the sense of Scripture” ? I answer—They differ not so much about the literal sense, or translation of Scripture, as about the construction which they put upon the literal sense. For example, all are agreed that those words, *Take, eat, this is my body, which is broken for you*, are rightly and well translated ; but the question is what is the meaning of them ? The papist will tell you that they mean, that the bread in the Lord’s Supper is really turned into the body, soul, and divinity of Christ ; the protestant very justly denies the monstrous and idolatrous absurdity, and affirms that the bread is only a figurative representation of Christ’s sacrificed body.

DISSERTATION IV.

CHAP. I.

*On the Creation :**Including Preliminary Observations.*

" These are thy Works, Parent of Good !
 Almighty, thine this universal Frame,
 Thus wonderful fair ; thyself how wonderful then !"

That there is one first uncaused Cause, from whom all other beings derive their existence, and upon whom they have their entire dependence, has already been proved.— Consequently, all beings, except the first cause, must have been produced, or brought into being by the power and agency of the first Cause.

Of the creation of all things, Moses, in Gen. i. has given us a summary account ; not in a precise philosophical manner, but so as to give the men of that age, in which he wrote, just and affecting notions, of this first and most stupendous work of God, so far as was necessary to the purposes of true Religion, and no farther. It is enough therefore, that this account is true, so far as it goes, and not inconsistent with the most accurate discoveries, which have been made in latter Ages, concerning the system of the universe, or any part of it.

Creation, in its primary import, signifies the bringing into being, something which did not before exist. The term is therefore most generally applied to the original production of the materials, or the *prima materia*, whereof the visible world is composed. It is also used in a secondary or subordinate sense, to denote those subsequent operations of the Deity upon this matter so produced, by which the whole system of nature, and all the primitive genera of things, receive their form, qualities, and laws.

It has been supposed, and asserted by some of the ancients, as well as modern free-thinkers, that the materials of

which the world is composed, are eternal. But that this opinion is at variance with the signification of the word *create*, in Gen. i. 1. is, and always has been, the opinion of those whose decision, on a subject of this nature, is every way worthy of our regard and credence. A learned author observes, that the Rabbins, who are legitimate judges in a case of verbal criticism on their own language, are unanimous in asserting, that the Hebrew word *bara*, expresses the commencement of the existence of a thing ; or its egression from nonentity to entity. It does not, in its primary meaning, denote the preserving or new forming things that had previously existed, as some imagine ; but *creation* in the proper sense of the term, though it has some other acceptations, in other places. The supposition that God formed all things out of a pre-existing eternal nature, is certainly absurd : for, if there was an eternal nature besides an eternal God, there must have been two self existing, independent, and eternal beings, which is a most palpable contradiction.

It was the opinion of Aristotle and some others, that the world was eternal, both as it respects its *matter* and *form*. But that the present system of things had a beginning, appears evident, if we consider the following things: 1. We see the world incessantly changing ; whereas if it were eternal it would be self-existent, and if self-existent always the same. 2. We have no credible history of transactions more remote than six thousand years, from the present time. 3. We can trace the invention of the most useful arts and sciences, which probably had been carried farther, and invented sooner, had the world been eternal. 4. The origin of the most considerable nations of the earth, may be traced, i. e. the time when they first inhabited the countries where they now dwell ; and it appears that most of the western nations came from the east. 5. If the world be eternal, it is hard to account for the tradition of its beginning, which has almost every where prevailed, though under different forms, among both polite and barbarous nations. 6. We have a most ancient and credible history of the beginning of the world ; I mean the history of Mo-

ees, with which no book in the world, in point of antiquity can contend.

Moses, having received, by divine revelation, instruction concerning the origin and formation of the world, conducts us, at once, to its great and adorable Architect. *In the beginning God created the Heavens and the Earth.* Here he adopts a phraseology whereby he expresses, the Supreme Being, and that is generally used in the Old Testament for the same purpose, which is very important and necessary to be understood, as it gives us information after what manner he exists. The original word *Elohim*, God, says a great linguist, is certainly the plural form of *el*, or *eloah*, and has long been supposed to imply plurality of persons in the Divine Nature. And this *plurality* appears in so many parts of the sacred writings to be confined to *three Persons*, namely, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, hence the doctrine of the *Trinity*. Mr. PARKHURST, who has greatly distinguished himself in Hebrew Literature, directs his readers, who may doubt whether *Elohim*, when meaning the true God, be plural or not, to about twenty five passages in the Old Testament.

CHAP. II.

On the Chaotic Mass, &c.

"Before the seas, and this terrestrial ball,
And heaven's high canopy, that covers all,
One was the face of nature; if a face:
Rather a rude and indigested mass.
A lifeless lump, unfashion'd, and unfram'd,
Of jarring seeds; and justly Chaos nam'd."

During the first state of things, Moses informs us, that the earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep. The original terms *tohu* and *bo-*

boe, translated without form and void, convey the idea of confusion and disorder. It seems plain, that Moses considered the whole terraqueous globe as being created in a *fluid state*, the earthy and other particles of matter being mingled with the water. The present form of the earth demonstrates the truth of the Mosaic account ; for it is well known, that, if a soft elastic globular body be rapidly whirled round on its axis, the parts at the poles will be flattened, and the parts at the equator, midway between the north and south poles will be raised up. This is precisely the shape of our earth. It has been demonstrated by admeasurement, that the earth is flattened at the poles and raised at the equator. This was first conjectured by Sir Isaac Newton, and these conjectures have been since corroborated, and consequently the account of the Mosaic creation has been confirmed. During the continuance of this chaotic mass, the materials and ingredients of all bodies, were mingled in confusion with one another, so that heavy and light, dense and rare, fluid and solid particles, were jumbled together ; so that the small constituent parts of fire, air, water and earth, were promiscuously scattered throughout.

The chaotic mass continued in this state, until God was pleased to assimilate, assort, and arrange the materials, out of which he built up, in the space of six days, the whole of the solar system. The Spirit of God, represented as sitting upon the vast abyss, like as a bird does upon its nest, while either in the acts of incubation or fostering its young, *moved* or brooded upon the *face of the waters*, communicating, by his vital energy, life and motion to the unformed chaos.

God "from the first,
Was present, and with mighty wings outspread,
Dove-like sat brooding on the vast abyss,
And made it pregnant."

CHAP. III.

The Creation of Light.

"Let there be light, said God ; and forthwith light
 Etherial, first of things, quintessence pure,
 Sprung from the deep ; and from her native east
 To journey through the very gloom began,
 Spher'd in a radiant cloud ; (for yet the sun
 Was not ;) she in a cloudy tabernacle
 Sojourn'd the while."

"Let there be light and there was light." Nothing can be conceived more dignified than this form of expression. It argues at once uncontrollable authority and omnific power ; and in human language it is scarcely possible to conceive that God can speak more like himself. Hence it is said, that this passage fell in the way of Dionysius Longinus, who observes, the Jewish Lawgiver, having conceived a just idea of the Divine power, expressed it in a dignified manner ; for at the beginning of his law ; he speaks thus ; GOD SAID—What ? LET THERE BE LIGHT ! *And there was Light.*

Light was once considered to be a property or quality of matter only ; but more recently it has been discovered to be a *body*, a very subtile fluid, consisting of minute particles.

Of all material bodies, light is the most *simple*. It is also a most pure body ; it has no defilement in itself, neither is it capable of contracting pollution from any other body. When it shines upon a dunghill or sepulchre, which sends forth the most offensive effluvia, it still remains uncontaminated.

The velocity of light is prodigious, and almost incredible, moving at the astonishing rate of 194,188 in one *second of time* ! or, according to Sir Isaac Newton's calculation, the rays of light take only about seven minutes in the passage from the sun to our earth, which is a distance of 95,513,794 English miles !

There is no creature of God that *diffuses* itself, and its

influence reaches so far and wide as light. Nay, the space in which it is diffused is not less than the universe itself; the immensity is not only beyond the reach of numbers, but beyond the limits of human understanding.

Such is the utility of this light, that this world which now may be compared to a palace, would without it be a dungeon. If the creature be so excellent, what must the Creator? and to admire the former without adoring the latter, would be profane and atheistical.

Light in thy light, O may we see,
Thy grace and blessing prove;
Reviv'd, and cheer'd, and blest by thee,
The God of pardoning love.

CHAP. IV.

The Creation of the Atmosphere.

On the second day God made a space or *expansion*, surrounding the solid earth to a certain height, and, taken altogether, is called the *atmosphere*. This signifies a body of vapour in a spherical form. The second great production of the Almighty was the element, which is next in simplicity, purity, activity, and power, to the light, and no doubt was also used by him as an agent in producing some subsequent effects.

The atmosphere is a vast laboratory, in which nature operates immense analyses, solutions, precipitations, and combinations; it is the grand receiver, in which all the attenuated and volatilized productions of terrestrial bodies are received, mingled, agitated, combined, and separated.

Though, in this view, the atmosphere seems to be a kind of sink or common sewer, where all the poisonous effluvia, arising from putrid and corrupted matters are deposited;

yet it has such a way of purifying itself, that it never becomes noxious, except in particular places, and for a short time.

That the air is a heavy body, has been demonstrated by a variety of experiments. The air at the earth is more dense than at a distance, because it is pressed down by the whole weight of the superincumbent air. As the matter of which the air is composed is variable, so likewise will the weight or gravity be, as the Barometer of various kinds and structure evinces. If the tube were a square inch wide, it would, allowing the mercury to stand $29\frac{1}{2}$ inches high, contain $29\frac{1}{2}$ cubic inches of mercury, which is just fifteen pounds weight; and so much weight of air every square inch of the earth's surface sustains; and every square foot must sustain a pressure of 2160. At this rate a middle sized man must sustain a weight of 32,400 pounds.

As the earth's surface contains, in round numbers, 200,000,000 square miles, it must contain no less than 5,575,680,000,000,000 square feet; which being multiplied by 2160, the numbers of pounds on each square foot, amounts 12,043,468,800,000,000 pounds for the weight of the whole atmosphere.

By this enormous pressure we should undoubtedly be crushed in a moment, were not all parts of our bodies filled either with air, or some other elastic fluid, the spring of which is just sufficient to counterbalance the weight of the atmosphere.

Our bodies are sometimes pressed with a weight one ninth more, or one ninth less, than at other times. This must, no doubt, have considerable effect on our feelings, and consequently on our health; and the fact is that it has so: but we are apt to ascribe this effect to a wrong cause. When we feel dull and languid, we think it is owing to the air's being thick and heavy about us, but it is just the reverse.

The transparency of the air is a very beneficial property it possesses. Without this the heavens would not appear bright in the day time—we should have no twilight—whenever we turned our backs to the sun, the whole heavens would appear as dark as the night, and the stars would

be seen as clear as in the nocturnal sky. We cannot but see the wisdom of God displayed in this contrivance, to prevent the sudden transition from light to darkness ; and his goodness is manifested therein to man.

" From night to day, from day to night,
The *dawning* and the *dying* light
Lectures of heavenly wisdom read ;
With silent eloquence they raise.
Our thoughts to the Creator's praise,
And neither sound nor language need."

CHAP. V.

The Creation of the Earth and the Seas.

The more we examine the Mosaic account of the creation, the more we see the excellency of his system ; especially when we attend to the inconveniences which have resulted from ignorance, disbelief, or neglect of it. The Hebrew lawgiver affirms, that God created the earth, sea, birds, beasts, and fishes, for the convenience of mankind. Had naturalists embraced this account, and exercised their talents in discovering the laws which prevail in this system, their time might have been usefully employed ; whereas by deviating from this account we find that they exhibit nothing but errors and absurdities. Newton, by agreeing with the inspired writers concerning the production of the several elements, and the motion and organization of the whole, has devised a theory which will last forever ; while the systems of fantastic writers are forgotten and disregarded. This prince of Philosophers, by adopting the Mosaic account, has investigated the laws which prevail in our system, and proved them the best that could possibly have been contrived : thus exerting his abilities for the glory of God, and good of man, and not employing them

against his Creator, like some ancient and modern unbelievers.

The Almighty, on the third day, proceeds to separate, put in order, and control the element nearest to *light* and *air* in quality and use, fluid like them, comparatively simple and pure, and, although not elastic, yet of great power. Probably the air was used by him as an agent in gathering the waters into one place. Thus, instead of the confusion, which existed when the earth and the water were mixed in one great mass, there was now order, and by such a separation, both were rendered useful, the earth was prepared to be a habitation for man, and to yield him support, as well as for various orders for land animals; and the waters were for the still more numerous tribes of living creatures, formed to abide in the seas, lakes and rivers, and seek their subsistence therein.

Previous to this arrangement, the water being a pure element, it was above the earth. The waters being gathered into one place were confined there, that they might not return to cover the earth.

It is wonderful that the sea, which being a purer and lighter element, has a natural disposition to be above the earth, should not overflow it; but the power of God keeps it in the place which he has provided for it.

The sea water contains a quantity of salt, but not in the same proportion every where. It contains the greatest quantity of salt in the torrid zone, where otherwise, from the excessive heat, it would be in danger of putrefaction: as we advance northward this quantity diminishes, till at the pole it is nearly gone altogether.

To ascertain the depth of the sea, has been found a thing impracticable, both on account of the numerous experiments which it would be necessary to make, and the want of proper instruments for that purpose. Beyond a certain depth the sea has hitherto been found unfathomable, and though several methods have been contrived to obviate this difficulty, none of them has completely answered the purpose. We know in general that the depth of the sea increases as we leave the shore; but if this con-

tinued above a certain distance, the depth in the middle of the ocean would be prodigious. Indeed the numerous islands every where scattered in the sea demonstrate the contrary, by shewing us that the bottom of the sea is unequal like the land, and that so far from uniformly sinking, it sometimes rises into lofty mountains. If the depth of the sea be in proportion to the elevation of the land, as has been generally supposed, its greatest depth will not exceed five or six miles; for there is no mountain six miles perpendicular above the level of the sea. The sea has never been actually sounded to a greater depth than a mile and 66 feet; every thing beyond that therefore, rests entirely upon conjecture and analogical reasoning, which, in this case, is no wise conclusive. Along the coasts, where the depth of the sea is generally well known, it has always been found proportioned to the height of the shore: when the coast is high and mountainous, the sea that washes it is deep; when, on the contrary, the coast is low the water is shallow. Whether this analogy holds at distance from the shore, experiments alone can determine.

The sea has three kinds of motion: the first is that undulation which is occasioned by the wind. This motion is evidently confined to the surface; the bottom, even during the most violent storms, remains perfectly calm. The second kind of motion is that continual tendency which the whole water in the sea has towards the West. It is greater near the equator than about the poles; and indeed cannot be said to take place at all in the northern hemisphere beyond the tropic. The third and most remarkable motion of the sea, is the tide, which is a regular swell of the ocean every 12 hours, owing, as Sir ISAAC NEWTON has demonstrated, to the attraction of the Moon. In the middle of the sea the tide seldom rises higher than one or two feet, but on the coast it frequently rises higher than 45 feet. When the Sun and Moon act conjointly on the tides, which is at the change and full of the moon, they are stronger and run higher than at other times, and are called *spring tides*; but when the Sun and Moon are 90 degrees apart, their attractive powers are opposed, and oc-

casion the tides to be weaker and lower than at other times, and these are called *neap tides*.

"The moon turns ocean in his bed,
From side to side in constant ebb and flow,
And purifies from stench his wat'ry realms."

The water exists in four parts, viz. : solid or ice ; liquid or water ; vapour or steam ; and in a state of composition with other bodies. The ice is only the re-establishment of the parts of water in their natural state. Underneath the poles water is always solid ; there it is similar to the hardest rocks. When the water is converted into ice, it is lighter than in a fluid state, which is a circumstance of great importance. It was necessary for the preservation of the world, that water should be subjected to a law different from that of other substances which change from fluid to solid, that of being lighter. The wisdom and goodness of the great ARTIFICER of the world will manifest itself in this arrangement. Had water been subject to the general law, and, like other fluids, become specifically heavier by the loss of its caloric. In the winter, the water on the surface of our rivers would sink when froze ; another sheet of water would freeze immediately, and sink also ; the ultimate consequence of which would be, that the beds of our rivers would become repositories of immense masses of ice, which no subsequent summer could unbind, and the world would shortly be converted into a frozen chaos.

My limits will not, at present, permit me to introduce the three other states in which water is found ; and the aqueous fluid, vapour, clouds, rain, proportion between sea and land ; mountains, vegetables ; power of multiplying, manner of dissemination, &c. are all subjects of importance, but in this place I can do no more than mention their names. Except concerning the vegetable creation, I may be allowed to say a few words, which shall conclude this chapter. In noticing this subject, the first thing by which our attention is arrested is, the goodness of God in displaying his consummate wisdom in that which is little as well as

that which is great. Who can account for, or comprehend the structure of a single tree or plant? The roots, the stem, the woody fibres, the bark the rind, the air-vessels, the sap-vessels, the leaves, the flowers, the fruits, are so many mysteries. All the skill, wisdom, power of men and angels could not produce a single grain of wheat! A serious and reflecting mind can see the grandeur of God, not only in the immense cedars on Lebanon, but also in the endlessly varied forests that appear through the microscope in the mould of cheese, &c.

CHAP. VI.

The Solar System, &c.

So little can here be said on a subject so vast, that it may, to some, appear improper to introduce it at all. It may be sufficient, in reply to this to say, that, in my opinion, not to introduce it would be a culpable omission.—The astronomical discoveries which have recently been made, have explained things which prior to such discoveries appeared inexplicable. And who shall say what discoveries may be made in future ages! Who can prescribe to science her boundaries, or restrain the active and insatiable curiosity of man within the precincts of his present acquirements? We may guess with plausibility what we cannot anticipate with confidence. The day may yet be coming, when our instruments of observation shall be inconceivably more powerful. They may lay open to us the unquestionable vestiges of art, industry, and intelligence. In the progress of years we may trace the hand of cultivation, spreading a new aspect over some portion of a planetary surface. Perhaps some large city, the metropolis of a mighty empire, may expand into a visible spot by the

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The roots,
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powers of some future telescope. Perhaps the glass of some observer, in a distant age, may enable him to construct the map of another world, and to lay down the surface of it in all its minute and topical varieties. But there is no end of conjecture, and to the men of other times, we leave the full assurance of what we can assert with the highest probability, that yon planetary orbs are so many worlds, that they teem with life, and that the mighty being, who presides in high authority over this scene of grandeur and astonishment, has there planted the worshippers of his glory.

Observations on the Sun.

Soul of the worlds ! In whom best seen
Shines out thy Maker !—
'Tis by thy secret, strong, attractive force,
As with a chain indissoluble bound,
Thy system rolls entire.
INFORMER of the planetary train !
Without whose quick'ning glance their cumbrous orbs
Were brute unlovely mass, inert and dead,
And not, as now, the green abodes of life !

THOMSON.

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On the nature of the sun there have been various conjectures. It was long thought that he was a vast globe of fire, 1,384,462 times larger than the earth ; and that he was continually emitting from his body innumerable millions of fiery particles, which extremely divided, answered for the purpose of light and heat, without occasioning any ignition or burning, except when collected in the focus of a convex lens or burning glass. Against this opinion, however, many serious and weighty objections have been made ; it has been so pressed with difficulties, that philosophers have been obliged to seek for a theory less repugnant to nature and probability. Dr. Herschel's discoveries, by means of his immensely magnifying telescopes, have, by the general consent of philosophers, added a new habitable world to our system, which is the *sun*. Without stopping to enter into detail, which would be improper here, it is sufficient to say, that these discoveries tend to

prove, that what we call the *sun* is only the *atmosphere* of that luminary ; that this atmosphere consists of various elastic fluids, that are more or less lucid and transparent ; that as the clouds belonging to our earth are probably decompositions of some of the elastic fluids belonging to the atmosphere itself, so we may suppose that in the vast atmosphere of the sun, similar decompositions may take place, but with this difference, that the decompositions of the elastic fluids of the sun are of a *phosphoric* nature, and are attended by lucid appearances, by giving out light.

The sun throned in the centre of his planetary system, gives light and warmth, and the vicissitudes of seasons, to an extent of surface, several hundreds of times greater than that of the earth which we inhabit.

We cannot conclude this chapter without inquiring who made that luminary, which is an inexhausted source of light, heat, and comfort ? that luminary, which without the assistance of any fire, is able to shed day through a thousand realms, and not to confine his munificence to realms only, but to send his influences to surrounding worlds :—that luminary that is the prime cheerer of the animal and the vegetable tribes, who is so beautiful in himself ; so beneficial in his effects, that erring heathens addressed him with adorations, and mistook him for their Maker. He was made by that Being, who filled the orb of the sun with a profusion of lustre ; before whom his meridian splendours are but a shade.

CHAP. VII.

The Moon.

“As when the moon, refulgent lamp of night,
 O'er heav'n's clear azure spreads her sacred light;
 When not a breath disturbs the deep serene,
 And not a cloud o'er casts the solemn scene;
 Around her throne the vivid planets roll,
 And stars unnumber'd gild the glowing pole;
 O'er the dark tree a yellower verdure shed,
 And tip with silver ev'ry mountain's head;
 Then shine the vales; the rocks in prospect rise;
 A flood of glory bursts from all the skies;
 The conscious swains, rejoicing in the light,
 Eye the blue vault, and bless the useful light.”

There is scarcely any doubt now remaining in the philosophical world, that the moon is a *habitable* globe. The most accurate observations that have been made, have confirmed this opinion. The moon seems, almost in every respect, to be a body similar to our earth, to have its surface diversified by hills and dales, mountains and vallies, rivers, lakes, and seas. And there is the fullest evidence that our earth serves as a moon to the moon herself, differing only in this, that as the earth's surface is thirteen times larger than the moon's, so the moon receives from the earth a light thirteen times greater in splendour than that which she imparts to us; and by very correct analogy we are to infer, that all the planets and their *satellites*, are inhabited, for matter seems only to exist for the sake of intelligent beings.

Let us then, contemplate the moon as walking among the host of stars, who, in her lucid appearance is superior to them all: as the fair ruler of the night, who sometimes half restores the day, with her waxing brightness; sometimes wanes into dimness, and scarcely scatters the nocturnal gloom;—as covered with sack-cloth and alarming the gazing nations.

But let us especially contemplate, love, and fear him,

who dresses her opake globe, in beaming, but borrowed silver, even that Being whose dignity is unchangeable, underrived, and all his own.

CHAP. VIII.

The Planets.

The order of the SIGNS is thus described by *Dr. Watts* :

The *Ram*, the *Bull*, the heavenly *Twins*,
And next the *Crab* the *Lion* shines,
The *Virgin* and the *Scales* ;
The *Scorpion*, *Archer*, and *Sea-Goat*,
The *Man* that holds the *Water-Pot*,
And *Fish* with glittering tails.

There is much in the scenery of a nocturnal sky to lift the soul to pious contemplation. The person who is engaged in such contemplation, feels himself, as it were, withdrawn from the earth, and raised in lofty abstraction above this little theatre of human passions and human anxieties. The mind of such a man abandons itself to reverie, and is transferred into the ecstasy of its thoughts, to distant and unexplored regions. It sees nature in the simplicity of her great elements, and it sees the God of nature invested with the high attributes of wisdom and majesty.

The world in which we live, is a round ball of determined magnitude, and occupies its own place in the firmament. But, when we explore the unlimited tracts of that space which is every where around us, we meet with other balls of equal, or superior magnitude ; and from which our earth would either be invisible, or appear as small as any of those twinkling stars which are seen on the canopy of heaven. And this again reminds us, that we cannot reasonably suppose, that our earth which is but a little spot in the immensity which surrounds it, should be the exclusive abode of

life and intelligence. What reason have we to suppose that these planets which are known to be worlds in magnitude, should not also be worlds in use and dignity ? What though, from our remote place of observation, we can see nothing but the naked roundness of yon planetary orbs ? Are we therefore to say, that they are so many vast and unpeopled solitudes ; that desolation reigns in every part of the universe but ours ; that the whole energy of the divine attributes is expended on one insignificant corner of these mighty works ; and that to this earth alone, belongs the bloom of vegetation, or the blessedness of life, or the dignity of rational and immortal existence ?

We have something more than the mere magnitude of the planets to alledge, in favour of the idea that they are inhabited. We know that this earth turns round upon itself ; and we observe that all these celestial bodies, which are accessible to such an observation, have the same movement. We know that the earth performs a yearly revolution round the sun ; and we can detect in all the planets which compose our system, a revolution of the same kind, and under the same circumstances. They have the same succession of day and night. The same agreeable vicissitude of the seasons.

In all these things we see, that God, in his wisdom, has done the same things for the accommodation of the planets that he has done for the earth which we inhabit. And shall we say that the resemblance stops here, because we are not in a situation to observe it ? Shall we say that this scene of magnificence has been called into being merely to gratify a few astronomers ? Shall we measure the counsels of heaven by the narrow impotence of the human faculties ? or suppose that not a worshipper of Divinity is to be found through the wide extent of yon vast and immeasurable regions ?

CHAP. IX.

The Stars.

"When I consider —— the stars which thou hast ordained ;
 what is man that thou art mindful of him ? and the son of man
 that thou visitest him ?" Ps.

The stars in general are considered to be *suns*, similar to that in our system, each having an appropriate number of planets moving round it ; and that as these stars are innumerable, consequently there are innumerable worlds, all dependent on the power, protection, and the providence of God.

The planetary system has its boundary, but space has none. There are only five, or at most six, of the planetary orbs visible to the naked eye. What then is that multitude of other lights which sparkle in our firmament, and fill the whole concave of heaven with innumerable splendours ? The planets are all attached to the sun ; and, in circling around him, they do homage to that influence which binds them to perpetual attendance on this great luminary. But the other stars do not own his dominion.— Are these innumerable fires only made to shed a feeble glimmering over this little spot in the kingdom of nature ? or do they serve a purpose worthier of themselves, to light up other worlds, and give animation to other systems ? The first thing which strikes a scientific observer of the fixed stars, is their immeasurable distance. If a body were projected from the sun with the velocity of a cannon-ball, it would take hundreds of thousands of years before it described that mighty interval, which separates the nearest of the fixed stars from our sun and from our system. If this earth, which moves at the velocity of a million and a half miles a-day, were to be hurried from its orbit, and to take the same rapid flight over this immense tract, it would not have arrived at the termination of its journey, after

taking all the time which has elapsed since the creation of the world.

This, in some degree, accounts for the diminutive appearance, which according to our views, the stars have. We know that every visible object appears less in magnitude as it recedes from the eye. The lofty vessel, as it retires from the coast, shrinks into littleness, and at last appears in the form of a small speck on the verge of the horizon. The eagle, with its expanded wings, is a noble object; but when it takes its flight into the upper regions of the air, it becomes less to the eye, and is seen like a little dark spot upon the vault of heaven. The same is true of all magnitude. The heavenly bodies appear small to an inhabitant of our world, only from the immensity of their distance.

DISSERTATION V.

Religion.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

Unanimity of sentiment has by no means prevailed among men, concerning the word *Religion*. According to the opinion of most modern grammarians, the word is derived from *religare*, "to bind fast." If this etymology have just claims to accuracy, then the word *religion* will denote the diligent study of whatever pertains to the worship of God. The Religions which exist in the world have generally been divided into four—the Pagan, the Jewish, the Mahometan, and the Christian; on each of which a few words shall here be inserted.

CHAP. I.

THE PAGAN RELIGION.

The Religion of Pagans, or heathens consisted in the adoration of idols or false Gods. It is said the theology of Pagans was of three sorts. The first of these may well be called fabulous, as treating of the Theology and Genealogy of their deities, in which they mention such things as are unworthy of deity ; ascribing to them thefts, murders, adulteries, and all manner of crimes ; and therefore this kind of theology is condemned by the wiser sort of heathens as nugatory and scandalous.

The second sort, called *physic*, or natural, was studied and taught by the philosophers, who, rejecting the multiplicity of Gods introduced by the poets, brought their theology to a more natural and rational form, and supposed that there was but one Supreme God, which they commonly make to be the *Sun* ; at least an emblem of him, but at too great a distance to mind the affairs of the world, and therefore devised certain demons, which they considered as mediators between the Supreme God and man ; and the doctrines of these demons, to which the apostle is thought to allude in 1 Tim. iv. 1. were what the philosophers had a concern with, and who treat of their nature, office, and regard to men.

The *third* part, called *politic*, or civil, was instituted by legislators, statesmen and politicians : the first among the Romans, was Numan Pompilius ; this chiefly respected their gods, altars, sacrifices, and rites of worship, and was properly their idolatry, the care of which belonged to the priests ; and this was enjoined the common people, to keep them in obedience to the civil state.

It is manifest that this religion of the heathen, is preferable to none at all, when in the hands of those persons who have had any equitable pretensions to wisdom. No regular government was ever established without some religion ; as if the former were defective without the latter, and the one was a necessary appendage to the other. Not that it

is to be devised for political purposes. Heathen law-givers, who were ignorant of true religion, employed the false in supplying the defects of their laws, and the weakness of their authority.

We shall now perceive a few of the uses which were made of false religion by the wisest of the heathens. These men inculcated reverence for an oath, deified truth, justice, concord, fidelity, and erected temples in honour of them. The veneration, even of false gods, contributed to make oaths binding, leagues obligatory, and compacts inviolable. These remarks, if necessary, might easily be substantiated by abundance of proofs.

But notwithstanding this, it cannot be concealed, that upon the whole, the heathen philosophers contributed but little towards a reformation of manners. They were but few in number and rarely instructed any except persons of fortune; and their notions were too abstruse for the generality of the people. They taught their disciples to dispute, rather than to live. They amused the understandings of their scholars, without improving their minds, and prescribed rules, but violated them by their conduct. They had little authority to enforce moral precepts, and this little was diminished by endless disputes. Their wisdom was not levelled against the prevailing vices; nor did they labour generally, nor sufficiently to improve mankind in virtue. They totally neglected the instruction of the poor, in moral and social duties. In fact, the lectures which they gave were not calculated to meliorate, but to corrupt men's hearts. It was the observation of a great divine and reformer, that he who acquires his learning at the expense of his morals, is the worse for his education: and we may add, that he whose heart is not improved with his understanding, is not much the better for it; for he ought to measure his progress in science by the improvement of his morals; and remember he is no further a learned man than he is a wise and good man; and that he cannot have any pretensions to true wisdom, until he have acquired true piety.

It is a lamentable thought that upwards of 480 millions (nearly half the globe) are supposed to be yet in pagan

darkness. Considerable attempts have been made of late years, for the enlightening of the heathen ; and there is every reason to believe good has been done. From the aspect of scripture prophecy, we are encouraged to believe that the kingdoms of the heathen shall be brought to the light of the Gospel. Whether it be possible for the heathen to be saved without the knowledge of the gospel, is a controversy of long standing : some have absolutely denied it upon the authority of those texts which universally require faith in Christ : but to this it is answered, that those texts regard only those to whom the light of the gospel comes, and who are capable of understanding the contents of it. Dr. Doddridge observes, the truth seems to be this ; that none of the heathens will be condemned for not believing the gospel, but they are liable to condemnation for the breach of God's natural law : nevertheless, if there be any of them in whom there is a prevailing love to the Divine Being, there seems reason to believe that, for the *sake* of Christ, though to them unknown, they may be accepted by God ; and so much the rather, as the ancient Jews, and even the apostles, during the time of our Saviour's abode on earth, seem to have had but little notion of those doctrines, which those who deny the salvability of the heathens are most apt to imagine to be necessary. A great deal which has been said in addition to what is here advanced, has been erroneous, and much of what has been said in contradiction to it, has generally been fanciful rather than useful.

CHAP. II.

THE JEWISH RELIGION.

I cannot agree with Voltaire, that Judaism consists entirely in offerings of birds and beasts, in show and ceremony. It is as unreasonable to confine the Jewish law and religion to such points, as it is to confine the gospel to baptism and the Lord's supper. The Mosaic code, besides many rites, requires us to believe in one God who

created the world, to love and fear him ; prohibits murder, adultery, stealth, and false witness ; and enjoins justice, charity, and love towards our neighbour.

However, the Mosaic institution, though superior to heathen systems, was defective in some points. Moses knew that though his law was perfect in its kind, yet, it was imperfect in itself. The Hebrew code was not intended for the whole human race, but for the Jews only ; not as a perfect law, but as a step to a perfect one. The Hebrew ritual was not sufficiently general to serve mankind : it does not mention a covenant between God and mankind, but between God and the Israelites ;—requires the Hebrews to repair thrice a year to particular places appointed for God's worship, commands the celebration of feast in commemoration of benefits conferred on that people only, and enjoins duties which other nations could not perform with propriety or convenience. The rewards and punishments of the Mosaic law were prosperity and adversity in the land of Canaan ; which sanctions were applicable to the Jews, and could not extend to the rest of mankind. Hence, it appears, that Judaism was local and temporary, and not intended as a rule for all men. Such an imperfect a revelation could not have been intended for a perpetual one ; had the first covenant been faultless there would have been no place found for the second. From what has been said, it appears that Judaism was imperfect, even in its purest state : and surely this imperfect system, as well as the morals of the Jews, were so corrupted at Christ's appearance, as to render a new revelation expedient and necessary.

The principal sects among the Jews, were the Pharisees and Sadducees. The Pharisees were a very numerous sect among the Jews, who, in their origin, were, very probably a pure and holy people. It is likely, that they got the name of Pharisees, or *separatists* from their separating themselves from the pollution of the Jewish national worship ; and hence, says a learned author, the word in the Anglo-Saxon version, means *holy persons who stand apart*, or by themselves : but, in process of time, like all religious sects

and parties, they degenerated: they lost the spirit of their institution, they ceased to recur to first principles, and had only the form of godliness, when Jesus Christ appeared in the world; for he bore witness, that they did make the outside of the cup and platter clean—they observed the rules of their institution, but the spirit was gone.

The Sadducees were a sect who denied the existence of angels and spirits, consequently all divine influence and inspiration, and also the resurrection of the dead. The Sadducees of that time were the materialist and deists of the Jewish nation.

When the Pharisees arose cannot be distinctly ascertained; but it is supposed to have been sometime after the Babylonish captivity. The sect of the Sadducees were the followers of one Sadock, a disciple of Antigonus Socraticus, who flourished about three hundred years before Christ. At present, the Jews have two sects; the *Caraites*, who admit no rule of religion but the law of Moses; and the *Rabbinists*, who add to the law the traditions of Talmud.

CHAP. III.

MAHOMETANISM.

By Mahometanism, is meant that system of doctrines and rites which are enjoined by the Koran, and which distinguish it from the Hebrew and Christian revelations. As Mahomet was acquainted with the law and the gospel, many of his doctrines are derived from these sources; while he adopted others which differ from them essentially, and had a considerable influence on the state of societies.—Hence we may ascribe the chief advantages of the Koran to the Jewish and Christian institutions, and all the evils which resulted from Mahometanism to deviations from the gospel.

Writers have differed widely with respect to the character of Mahomet, and to the motives which influenced him to a reformation of religion. Some have supposed him to

have been actuated by enthusiasm, others by ambition.— This prophet who was to be the last expectation of mankind has never been foretold. And what token has he to shew more than another man who may please to call himself a prophet? What miracles does he himself tell us that he wrought? What mysteries did he teach even according to his own account? What morality? What felicity? Mahomet is entirely without authority: his reasons, therefore, ought to be very cogent, as they rest entirely upon their own force. Any man can do what Mahomet did; for he wrought no miracle, his coming was never foretold. But what Jesus Christ has done, no other can do. Mahomet established his religion by killing others—Jesus Christ by making his followers lay down their own lives;—Mahomet by forbidding his law to be read—Jesus Christ by commanding us to read. In a word, the two were so opposite, that if Mahomet took the way, in human probability, to succeed; Jesus Christ took the way, humanly speaking, to be disappointed. And hence, instead of concluding, that because Mahomet succeeded, Jesus Christ in like manner might have succeeded; we ought to infer, that since Mahomet has succeeded, Christianity must have inevitably perished, if it had not been supported by a power altogether divine. The prophet of Arabia unquestionably possessed some very splendid virtues, but these were blended with many enormous crimes arising from his predominant passions of lust and ambition. But in the commencement of his career, as a prophet, he took care to conceal his nefarious practices, and to maintain some exterior decorum in his actions. Otherwise his reputation as a prophet must have been blasted by adultery, perjury, blasphemy, and other atrocious offences.

A very great part of the Koran was invented occasionally, to solve some difficulty, or to gratify his passions of lust or ambition. Having been defeated at Ohud he was ashamed, and said, that God suffered it on account of the transgressions of some of his followers, and to distinguish true from false believers. To silence the clamours of those who lost their friends in the engagement, he invented the doc-

trine of fate, and maintained that all events have been irrevocably fixed from eternity, that God had accurately predestinated the good or bad fortune of every person, his faith or infidelity, his obedience or disobedience ; that life cannot be protracted beyond the destined period by any human means ; that a man must die somewhere at the appointed time. We shall presently see that, in consequence of this doctrine, the Mahometans rushed dauntless into the jaws of danger and death, and esteemed their bodies as dirt and rubbish, to fill up the enemy's trenches for their brethren to pass over. He prevailed on Zeid to put away his wife, married her himself, and pretended that this crime was dispensed with from heaven. He publishes the 33d chapter of the Koran in vindication of himself, and introduces God as approving of this marriage, and rebuking him for abstaining from her so long, though he had his permission to marry her. He limited the number of wives and concubines of each person to four ; but reserved to himself the privilege of marrying as many as he pleased.-- He prohibited his disciples to marry near relations ; but, in his 33d chapter, introduces God exempting him from that prohibition, and allowing him to marry whomsoever he pleased, without any regard to degrees of consanguinity.

Mahomet believed in an earthly paradise ; the idea of which he probably borrowed from the Persians, and not from the Jews as has been often supposed. In this paradise he promised to his followers, beautiful gardens and rivers, into which none are admitted until their actions are weighed in a scale. If the bad actions preponderate, they are cast into hell, if the good they are admitted into paradise.

DISSERTATION VI.

The Christian Religion.

CHAP. I.

RELIGION's all, descending from its sire
 To wretched man, the goddess in her left
 Holds out this world, and in her right, the next—
 RELIGION ! Providence ! an after state !
 Here is firm footing ; here is solid rock ;
 This can support us ; all is sea besides ;
 Sinks under us ; bestorms, and then devours.
 His hand the good man fastens on the skies,
 And bids earth roll, nor feels the whirl.
 RELIGION ! thou soul of happiness ;
 And groaning Calvary of thee ! There shine
 The noble truths ; there strongest motives sting !
 Can love allure us ? or can terror awe ?
 He weeps !—the falling drop puts out the sun ;
 He sighs—the sigh earth's deep foundation shakes.
 If, in his love, so terrible, what then
 His wrath inflamed ? — — —

Dr. YOUNG.

CHRISTIAN LIBERTY.

Liberty of conscience, in matters of religion is justly allowed to be every man's birth-right ; and yet there are few subjects that have been more misunderstood, and erroneously represented than this. It appears to me to be proper, and even necessary, before I speak of the advantages, &c. of christianity, to say something concerning Christian LIBERTY ; “ for, say what we will, if this preliminary doctrine of right be disallowed, voluntary piety is the dream of an enthusiast ; the oracles of God in the christian world, like those of the Sybils in pagan Rome, are sounds convertible to senatorial sense ; and the whole christian mission, from the first prophet down to the last minister, is one long muster roll of states men's tools, a disgrace to their species, a contradiction to their profession, a dishonour to their God ! ”

For much more than a thousand years, the Christian world was a stranger to religious liberty. Even toleration

was unknown till about a century ago. And it is to be deeply lamented that even the Clergy have been unfriendly to it. So that when the Act of Toleration was obtained in King William's time, great numbers of them were much against it. It appears to me, however, that both the name and the thing (toleration) are inconsistent with the very nature of the Gospel of Christ: and this now appears to be generally understood, not only by those who may be considered, by some, as insignificant individuals, but by those in high authority. Lord HOLLAND said, in the House of Lords, not long ago, "I hate the word Toleration; it is a mean beggarly word." Has not one man as great a right to controul others in matters of religion, as others have a right to controul him? For one man to talk of tolerating another, implies an authority over him in matters of religion. Yet, who but Christ has any such authority. And what name shall we find for him who pretends to any such thing? Dr. OWEN is said to be the first, who wrote in favour of religious liberty, in the year 1648. He was followed by MILTON about the year 1658, in his *Treatise of the Civil Power in Ecclesiastical Causes*. And they were succeeded by the immortal LOCKE, who wrote a *Treatise on Toleration*, in 1689. But what is Christian liberty? In Italy it is a liberty to be a Roman, or a professor of the Romish religion, that is, a liberty to believe what the Bishop of Rome affirms to be true, and liberty to perform what he commands to be done. Glorious liberty!! or, more properly speaking, cruel bondage!

Liberty in some Protestant countries, is a liberty to believe what the reformers believed, and to renounce what they renounced, and to practice what they required. But we beg leave to define Christian liberty to be something more. And if we be asked, what is Christian liberty? we answer, it is liberty to be a Christian. One part of Christianity consists of propositions to be believed. Liberty to be a Christian believer, is liberty to examine these propositions, to form a judgment of them, to come to a self-determination, according to our own best abilities. Another part of Christianity consists of duties to be performed. Li-

erty to be a practical Christian is liberty to perform these duties, either as they regard God, our neighbour, or ourselves. Liberty to be a Christian, implies liberty not to be a Christian, or liberty to examine a proposition implies liberty to reject the arguments brought to support it, if they appear inconclusive, as well as liberty to admit them if they appear demonstrative. To pretend to examine Christianity, before we have established our right to do so, is to pretend to cultivate an estate before we have made our title to it, which is the same as building a house on the sand.

Our blessed Saviour has given us a direction which is full of consummate wisdom ; and which establishes the *limits*, regulates the *rights*, and distinguishes the jurisdiction of the two great empires of heaven and earth. The direction to which I refer, is contained in these words, "Render to Cesar the things that are Cesar's, and unto God the things that are God's." But what does a man owe to Cesar ? to the civil government under which lives ? Our Lord has answered this question—*That which is Cesar's*. But what is it that is Cesar's ? 1, Honour. 2, Obedience, And 3, Tribute. The civil government under which a man lives, and by which he is protected, demands his honour and reverence. In the Holy Scripture, fear God and honour the King, are duties closely connected. 2, The laws which are made for the suppression of evil doers, and the maintenance of good order, which are calculated to promote the benefit of the whole, and the comfort of the individual, should be religiously obeyed. 3, The government that charges itself with the support and expence of the whole, should have its unavoidable expences, however great, defrayed by the people, in whose behalf they are incurred : Therefore, we should pay tribute. But remember, if Cesar should intrude *into the things of God*, coin a new creed, or broach a new gospel, and affect to rule the conscience, while he rules the state ; in these things Cesar is not to be obeyed ; he is taking the things of God, and he must not get them. Give not therefore God's things to Cesar, and give not Cesar's things to God. That which belongs to the commonwealth, should on no account what-

ever, be devoted to religious uses ; and let no man think he has pleased God, by giving that to charitable or sacred uses, which he has purloined from the state.

CHAP. II.

The attentive reader is also desired to refer to St. Paul's epistle to the Romans, chap. 13, where he will see, with what dexterity, truth and gravity, the apostle, in a small compass, affirms and explains the foundation, nature, ends, and just limits of the magistrate's authority ; while he, at the same time, is pleading his cause, and teaching the subject the obedience which he owes to the civil government.

He begins by observing, " Let every soul be subject to the higher powers." In which words we are not to consider the apostle as teaching a doctrine of present *expediency* ; but as declaring the *mind* of God on a subject of the utmost importance to the peace of the world ; a doctrine which does not exclusively belong to any *class* of people, *order* of the community, or *official* situations ; but to *every soul*. And what is this solemn doctrine ? It is this : Let every man be obedient to the civil government, under which the providence of God has cast his lot.

As God is the origin of power, and the Supreme Governor of the universe, he delegates authority to whomsoever he will ; and though, in many cases, the governor himself may not be of God, yet, civil government is of him ; for, without this, there could be no society, no security, no private property ; all would be confusion and anarchy ; and the habitable world would soon be depopulated. The civil governor, whether he be *elective* or *hereditary*, agrees to govern according to the constitution recognised. Thus, we may consider, that there is a compact and consent between the governor and the governed ; and, in such a case, the potentate may be considered as coming to supreme authority by the way of God's providence : and, as civil government is of God ; who is the

fountain of law, order, and regularity; the civil governor who administers the laws of a state according to its constitution, is the minister of God. But now comes a question of great importance:—If the ruler be an immoral or profligate man, does he not prove himself, thereby, to be unworthy of his high office, and should he not be deposed? No. If he rule according to the constitution, nothing can justify rebellion against his authority. He may be *irregular* in his *own private* conduct; he may be an immoral man; and disgrace himself by an improper conduct; but if he *rule according to the law*; if he make no attempt to change the constitution, nor break the compact between him and the people, there is, therefore, no legal ground of opposition to his civil authority; and every act against him is not only *rebellion*, in the worse sense of the word, but it is unlawful, and absolutely sinful. For his *political* conduct, a ruler is accountable to his people: for his moral conduct, he is accountable to God, his conscience, and the ministers of religion. A king may be a good moral man, and yet a weak, and indeed a bad and dangerous prince.—He may be a bad man, and stained with vice in his private life, and yet be a good prince. It would be easy, in running over the list of our own kings, to point out several who were deservedly reputed *good kings*, who in their private lives were *immoral*. Bad as they might be, in private life, the constitution was, in their hands, ever considered a sacred deposit; and they faithfully preserved it, and transmitted it unimpaired to their successors, and took care, while they held the reins of government, to have it impartially and effectually administered.

It must be allowed, notwithstanding, that, when a prince, howsoever heedful to the laws, is unrighteous in his private life, his example is contagious: morality banished from the throne is discountenanced by the community; and happiness diminished in proportion to the increase of vice. On the other hand, when a king governs according to the constitution of his realms, and has his heart and life governed by the laws of God, he is then a double blessing to his people; while he is ruling carefully according to the

laws, his pious example is a great means of extending and confirming the reign of pure morality among his subjects. And there is a king in whom these excellencies, during a unusually protracted reign, have shone conspicuously ; I mean **GEORGE THE THIRD**. His care in watching over the constitution committed to his trust ; who has acted as a father to his people, whose exemplary, private conduct has exceeded in lustre the lives of all that have preceded him, whether in ancient or modern times. His tacitly discountenancing vice, not only by his religious conduct, but, by his frequent proclamations, forbidding sabbath-breaking, profane swearing, and immorality in general, have made it just to denominate him the best of kings.

But to return from this digression : does it not appear from what has been said, that, if a man is a peaceable, industrious, moral, and religious person, and an obedient subject to the civil government under which he lives, let his religious views of things, be what they may, he seems to have a just claim to the enjoyment of every office, privilege, and emolument of that government. When every member of society enjoys equal privileges with his fellow members, the bones of contention are removed, and there is nothing for which they should be at enmity. Equal and impartial liberty ; equal privileges and emoluments, are, or should be, the birth-right of every member of civil society ; and would be the glory of any government to bestow upon all its serious, religious, and morally-acting citizens, without any regard to the sect or party to which they belong. — Talents and integrity alone should be the *sine qua nons* to recommend any man to the notice of people in power.

CHAP. III.

Christ and Mahomet, with their lives and doctrines compared.

From what has been said already, we may form a tolerably correct judgment of the influence of Mahometanism in those countries in which it is established. The principal pernicious effects are reducible to the following heads : namely, a spirit of revenge, hatred of other sects, the despotism of rulers, the ignorance and servitude of subjects, the depopulation of countries by war and pestilence, and especially the inconveniences to individuals, and the public from pilgrimages to *Mecca*.

And, yet notwithstanding the inconveniences frequently arising from pilgrimages, they have been greatly in vogue, even in Great-Britain and Ireland. We find that in the year 1428, under the reign of Henry VI. abundances of licences were granted for the crown of England to Captains of English ships, for carrying numbers of devout persons to the shrine of St. James, at Compostella ; on condition, however, that those pilgrims should first take an oath, not to take any thing prejudicial to England, or do any thing that was likely to prove inimical to their country.

But pilgrimages are not only inconvenient, but they are unnecessary. Long journies in search of truth are not commanded : truth, such as is necessary for life and godliness, is always found where it is honestly sought : change of place is no natural cause of the increase of piety, for it inevitably produces dissipation of mind.—That the Supreme Being may be more easily propitiated in one place than in another, is the dream of idle superstition. He who thinks that his vices may be more easily combated, or who supposes that they will be more freely pardoned, in one place than in another, will not only find himself mistaken, but he dishonours at once his reason and his religion.

If we judge of the veracity and divinity of a religious system, from the tendency and effects of its doctrines, we must conclude that Mahometanism could not have been inspired by a good and wise God, who never dictates what, upon the whole, is hostile to the temporal happiness of his creatures. Comparing then, the good effects which are produced by christianity, in numerous instances, and the evil effects arising from Mahometanism, we may form a general opinion, of the truth or falsehood of those different systems of religion.

The authenticity of these remarks will acquire additional force, by contrasting Christ and Mahomet. Place, then, before your imagination Mahomet and his disciples, arrayed in armour and in blood, riding in triumph over the spoils of thousands, and tens of thousands, who fell by his victorious sword. Behold the cities which he set in flames, the countries which he ravaged and destroyed, and the miserable distress of all the inhabitants of the earth.—When you have beheld him in this scene, pursue him into his retirements, into his chamber; there see his concubines—his wives—his adultery; and there hear him alledge revelation, and his divine commission, to justify his lust and his oppression. When you are satiated with this prospect, then contemplate the blessed Jesus,—humble—meek, doing good to all the sons of men, patiently instructing both the ignorant and perverse. See him in his most retired privacies;—follow him to the mount, and hear his devotions and supplications unto God. Follow him to his table—view his fare, and hear his heavenly discourses;—see him injured but not provoked;—attend him to the tribunal, and consider the patience with which he endured the scoffs and reproaches of his enemies. Go to his cross—view him in the agony of death, and hear his last prayer for his persecutors.—*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!* When you have viewed both, ask which is the prophet of God?

CHAP. IV.

Comparison between Heathenism and Christianity.

It is not my intention to explain the disparity of these in every practicable way ; it being quite sufficient, for my present purpose, to notice in one or two instances only, wherein christianity is indubitably superior to heathenism.

The apostle saith, " After the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God to save believers by the foolishness of preaching." That is to say, since the mere systems of reason were eventually insufficient for the salvation of mankind ; and since it was impossible that their speculations should obtain the true knowledge of God ; God took another way to instruct them ; he revealed by preaching of the gospel what the light of nature could not discover, so that the system of Jesus Christ, and his apostles, supplied all that was wanting in the systems of the ancient philosophers.

Let us place before us the disciple of natural religion, and the disciple of revealed religion, at the tribunal of God, as penitents soliciting for pardon. The former cannot find by feeling after it, as St. Paul phrases it, the grand means of reconciliation, which God has given to the Church ; I mean the sacrifice of the Cross. Reason, indeed, discovers that a sinner deserves punishment. It presumes that God will yield to the entreaties of his creatures. It even goes so far as to perceive the necessity of satisfying divine justice. But, how likely soever all these speculations may be, they form only a systematic body without a head.—For, to them, the mystery of the cross is invisible. How can human reason alone, unassisted discover the mystery of redemption, when, alas ! after an infallible God has revealed it, reason is absorbed in its depth, and needs all its submission to receive it, as an article of faith ?

But that, which natural religion cannot attain, revealed religion clearly discovers. Revelation exhibits a god-man dying for the sins of mankind, and setting grace before every penitent sinner : grace for all mankind. This affords us ground to confide in the Divine mercy for the pardon of sins. All the steps of that high dispensation of Providence, lead directly to this conclusion. *He that spared not his son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things ?* This is the final result of the discoveries of the gospel. On this rests that system of consolation, which it hath reared up for men. We are not left to dubious and intricate reasonings, concerning the conduct which God may be expected to hold towards his offending creatures. Although ye have denied Christ with Peter, betrayed him with Judas, persecuted him with Saul ; yet the blood of a god-man is sufficient to obtain your pardon. His grace is accessible at all times. God every instant opens the treasures of his mercy, when sinners return to him by sincere repentance.

See, sinners, the gospel-glass,
The Friend and Saviour of mankind !
Not one of all the apostal race,
But may in him salvation find !
His thoughts—his words, and actions prove,
His life and death, ——— that God is love !

CHAP. V.

The danger of abusing this encouraging advice.

Woe be unto you, if abusing this encouraging display of God's mercy in Christ Jesus, you delay your return to God till the last moments of your lives. And you be con-

strained to mourn at the last, when thy flesh and thy body are consumed, and say how have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof. Such regrets, at such moments, are generally useless. Not as they regard others—they may serve to convince *them* what an evil and bitter thing it is to sin against God, and awaken in them a salutary, because a reasonable fear. But with regard to the individuals themselves, God often says, “because I have called, and ye have refused; I have stretched my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at naught all my counsel, and would have none of my reproof. I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you.” What! is this dying grief always, and invariably unavailing?—I answer; we are to describe things according to their natural and common course, and not according to occasional and very unusual exceptions. And in the case before us, are not exceptions very unusual? Do not men commonly die as they live? And with regard to those dying regrets, to which so many look forward as a final refuge—what degree of dependance is to be placed upon them? In reply to this, let the following remarks be examined:—

The first regards the Scripture. There we find one, and only one called at this hour. It was the dying thief. He implored mercy when the heaven was covered with blackness, and the earth trembled, and the rocks rent, and the graves were opened, and a suffering Saviour would crown the prodigies of nature with a miracle of grace—a case, in all its circumstances, so amazingly peculiar, that were men not infatuated by sin, it could never be drawn into a precedent.

The second is derived from observation. We have often attended persons on what was deemed their dying bed: we have heard their prayers and profession; we have seen their distress. But how few of these, on their recovery, have lived agreeably to the gospel of Christ.

The third regards the force of habit. *Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the Leopard his spots? then may ye also do*

good, that are accustomed to do evil. Diseases, which, if taken in time are curable, by becoming inveterate are rendered desperate. But you are ready to say, "There is no desperate case here. With God all things are possible.—His Grace is Almighty." Acknowledged : and you shall have all the encouragement derivable from a miracle of grace. But what *probability* is there, that an extraordinary dispensation of grace will be adopted, after all the ordinary means of salvation have been despised and neglected? And despised and neglected too—in *hope of this*?

Hence a fourth remark, regards the influence of such examples. If persons who live without God in the world, were as frequently called in their last hour, as too many seem to admit ; would not the frequency of this occurrence influence persons to procrastinate their religious concerns, and to say to every present application, *Go thy way for this time, when I have a more convenient season I will send for thee*!

But does God by his conduct, contradict his commands? And having said, *to-day* if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts ; *now* is the accepted time, *now* is the day of salvation ; and seek the Lord *while* he may be found, and call upon him *while* he is near—would he supersede the necessity, or weaken the impression of all this, by his constantly receiving sinners when they can insult him no longer. Let nothing in all this be construed so as to limit the Holy One Israel.—It is intended to excite seasonable repentance, by shewing the great hazard and uncertainty there is in deferring this great work until a dying hour force us to see the necessity of it.

CHAP. VI.

The Superiority of Christianity, &c.

But that which principally displays the prerogative of the Christian, above those that have only what is called natural religion, is an all-sufficient provision against the fear of death. A comparison between a dying pagan and a dying christian will shew this. I consider a Pagan in his dying bed speaking of himself what follows : On which side soever I consider my state, I perceive nothing but trouble and despair. If I observe the fore-runners, I see awful symptoms, violent sickness, and intolerable pain, which surround my sick-bed, and are the first scenes of the bloody tragedy. As to the world, my dearest objects disappear ; my closest connexions are dissolving ; my most specious titles are effacing ; my noblest privileges are vanishing away ; a dismal curtain falls between my eyes and all the decorations of the universe. In regard to my body, it is a mass without motion, and life : my tongue is about to be condemned to eternal silence ; my eyes to perpetual darkness ; all the organs of my body to entire dissolution ; and the miserable remains of my carcase to lodge in the grave, and to become food for worms. If I consider my soul, I scarcely know whether it be immortal : and could I demonstrate its natural immortality, I should not be able to say, whether my Creator would display his attributes in preserving, or destroying it ; whether my wishes for immortality be the dictates of nature, or the language of sin. If I consider my past life, I have a witness within me, attesting that my practice has been less than my knowledge, how small soever the latter hath been ; and that the abundant depravity of my heart hath thickened the darkness of mind. If I consider futurity, I think I discover through many thick clouds a future state ; my reason suggests that the Author of Nature has not given me a soul so sublime in thought, and so expansive in desire, merely to move in this little orb for

a moment : but this is nothing but conjecture ; and if there be another economy after this, should I be less miserable than I am here ? One moment I hope for annihilation, the next I shudder with the fear of being annihilated ; my thoughts and desires are at war with one another.— Such is the dying heathen. If a few examples of those who have died otherwise, be adduced, they ought not to be urged in evidence against what we have advanced ; for they are rare, and very probably deceptive, their outward tranquility being only a concealment. O ! how differently do christians die ! How does revealed religion triumph over the religion of nature in this respect ! May every one that shall read this be an evidence of this article ! The whole that troubles an expiring heathen, revives a christian's dying bed.

CHAP. VII.

The Death of the Christian.

I woo thee, Death ! in fancy's fairy paths
Let the gay songster rove, and gently trill
The strain of empty joy. Life and its joys
I leave to those that prize them.

—Forgive the tear
That feeble nature drops, calm all her fears,
Wake all her hopes, and animate her faith,
Till my wrapt soul, anticipating heav'n,
Bursts from the thralldom of incumbent clay,
And on the wing of Ecstasy upborne,
Springs into liberty, and light, and life.

DR. PORTEUS.

Thus speaks the dying Christian. When I consider the awful symptoms of death, and the violent agonies of dissolving nature, they appear to me as medical preparations, sharp, but salutary ; they are necessary to detach me from life.

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Beside, I shall not be abandoned to my own frailty; but my patience and constancy will be proportional to my sufferings, and that powerful arm, which hath supported me through life, will uphold me under the pressure of death. If I consider my sins, many as they are, I am invulnerable; for I go to a tribunal of mercy, where God is reconciled, and justice satisfied. If I consider my body, I perceive I am putting off a mean and corruptible habit, and putting on robes of glory. Fall, fall ye imperfect senses, ye frail organs; fall house of clay into your original dust; ye will be *sown in corruption, but raised in incorruption; sown in dishonour, but raised in glory; sown in weakness, but raised in power.* If I consider my soul, it is passing, I see, from slavery to freedom. I shall carry with me that, which thinks and reflects. I shall carry with me the delicacy of taste, the harmony of sounds, the beauty of colours, the fragrance of odoriferous smells. I shall surmount heaven and earth, nature and all terrestrial things, and my ideas of all their beauties will multiply and expand. If I consider the future economy, to which I go, I have, I own, very inadequate notions of it: but my incapacity is the ground of my expectation. Could I perfectly comprehend, it would argue its resemblance to some of the present objects of my senses, on its minute proportion of the present operation of my mind. If worldly dignities and grandeurs, if accumulated treasures, if the enjoyments of the most refined voluptuousness, were to represent to me celestial felicity I should suppose, that, partaking of their nature, they partook of their vanity. But, if nothing here can represent the future state, it is because that state surpasseth every other. My ardour is increased by my imperfect knowledge of it. My knowledge and virtue, I know, will be perfected; I know I shall comprehend truth, and obey order; I know I shall be free from all evils, and in possession of all good; I shall be present with God, I know, and with all the happy spirits who surround his throne; and this perfect state, I am sure, will continue for ever and ever. Such are the all-sufficient supports, which revealed religion affords against the fear of death. Such are the me-

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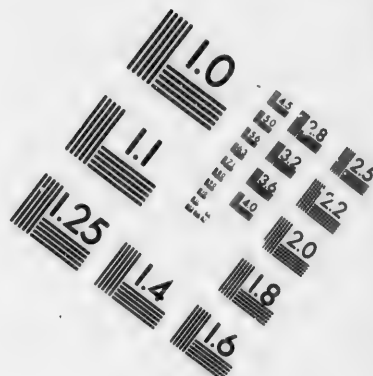
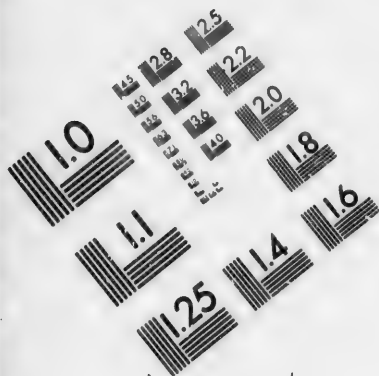
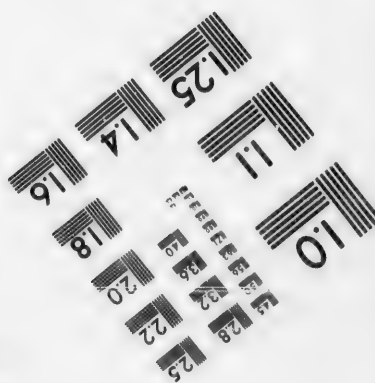
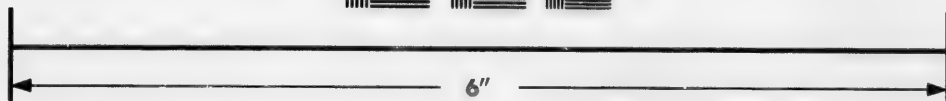
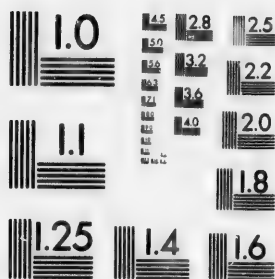


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ditations of a dying Christian ; not of one, whose whole christianity consists of dry speculations, which have no influence over his practice ; but of one who applies his knowledge to relieve the real wants of life ; and, who while he has the *form* of godliness, denies not the *power*.

The pious person, in his dying moments can testify to the honour of God's grace, that Jesus Christ is his salvation and his desire. In every difficulty, says he, thou hast been my guide ; in every danger my refuge ; in every distress my consolation. My happiest moments have been passed in communion with thee. And, though I cannot look back upon every part of my life as well spent ; yet, I review with thankfulness the instances of thy goodness. By thy grace I am what I am. And now I come to thee, and this soul of mine, which thou hast redeemed by thy blood, and won by thy love, I surrender. Yes,

The chamber where the good man meets his fate,
Is privileg'd beyond the common walk
Of virtuous life, quite in the verge of heaven.
His God sustains him in his final hour !
His final hour brings glory to his God !
Man's glory heaven vouchsafes to call his own.
Amazement strikes ! devotion bursts to flame ;
Christians adore ! and infidels believe.
At that black hour, which general horror sheds
On the low level of the inglorious throng,
Sweet peace, and heavenly hope, and humble joy,
Divinely beam on his exalted soul ;
Destruction gild, and crown him for the skies.
Life, take thy chance ; but oh for such an end.

DR. YOUNG.

Let us now, for a moment turn our attention to the death of the man that has been favoured with God's revealed will, but who has despised, neglected, and rejected it. Do tyrannical masters, wicked servants, selfish neighbours, hard-hearted professors of religion, die thus ? No—*When the wicked perish*, says Solomon, *there is shouting*.—This is dreadful.—For a man to think that there is no individual upon earth that wishes his continuance ; that if he were removed no one being would sigh ; and could he come back, he would find the door of life bolted against him—

Why there is something in this, more chilling than death, and more cruel than the grave. And yet how many are there, who, if they were carried to the grave to-morrow, would excite no lamentation over *them*—unless indeed, a lamentation that they had not died sooner. One perhaps would be ready to say—"O that the wretch had died, before, by his wanton speculations, he had ruined the substance that was to rear my babes." Another—"O that the wretch had died before he had seduced my daughter, the glory of my family." A third—"O that the wretch had died, before by his infidel principles, he had poisoned the mind of my darling son."

Ah ! says the man, that has lived without God in the world, in a dying hour, "This body is all weakness and pain, but my soul, as if strung up by torment, is full powerful to reason ; full mighty to suffer. And that, which thus triumphs within the jaws of mortality, is doubtless immortality. As for a Deity, nothing less than an Almighty could inflict what I feel. My soul, and my body, lie in ruins ; in scattered fragments of broken thought : remorse for the past, throws my thoughts on the future. Worse dread of the future, strikes it back again on the past. My principles have poisoned my friend ; my extravagance has beggared my boy ; my unkindness has murdered my wife ! And is there another hell ? Oh ! thou blasphemous, yet most indulgent Lord God ! Hell itself is a refuge, if it hides me from thy frown." I fear the following lines of that fine, though mournful poem, styled *The Grave*, are but too descriptive of what is frequently felt on this occasion :

At that dread moment, how the frantic soul
Raves round the walls of her clay tenement !
Runs to each avenue, and shrieks for help ;
But shrieks in vain !
A little longer ! Ah ! a little longer,
Might she but stay to wash away her crimes
And fit her for her passage ! moving sight !
Her very eyes weep blood, and every sigh
She heaves is big with horror ! but the foe,
Like a staunch murderer, steady to his purpose,
Pursues her close thro' every lane of life,

YOUNG.
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Nor misses once the track, but presses on
Till forc'd at last to the tremendous verge,
At once she sinks.

Hence on the one hand we infer, that religion has one undeniable advantage to recommend it—whatever it calls us to sacrifice or to suffer, it always ends well. *Mark the perfect man, says David, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace.* And even Balaam exclaims, *Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.*

On the other hand sin has one undeniable evil to excite our aversion and horror. Whatever sensual pleasure, and imaginary profits attend its course, it always ends dreadfully. We are far from allowing that the sinner has *present* happiness; for scripture and history, observation and experience, unite to prove that *the way of transgressors is hard.* But if it were not so—if it were easy and smooth, and flowery—yet, who would walk in it—*since the end of these things is death.*

CHAP. VIII.

Additional advantages of Religion.

Sweet peace it brings wherever it arrives,
It builds our quiet, as it forms our lives,
Lays the rough paths of peevish nature even,
And opens in each breast a little heaven.

Real religion discourages fornication, whereas the heathens were total strangers to the purity recommended by the gospel. Its letter and spirit improved the laws of all christian kingdome, in respect to purity, mercy, and other particulars. The first christian princes paid extraordinary attention to purity of manners among their subjects.—And hence, several of them are known to have threatened

the keepers of infamous houses, with heavy penalties.—Christianity was productive of extraordinary degrees of chastity, both before and after the promulgation of the laws just alluded to.

Christianity has rendered the domestic state much happier in all countries which embraced it. It abolished polygamy, a practice repugnant to the intention of the Creator, who at first made one male and one female, for social comfort, &c. Such is the equality of males and females born into the world, that serious inconveniences, and pernicious effects must result from a plurality of wives. In consequence of this, mutual jealousies must subsist between the wives and children, and partialities, which are unavoidable, must be a constant source of strife and discontent.

Adultery was allowed by the religion, the laws, and usages, of some heathen states. And not only adultery, licentious divorces, were common at Christ's appearance.—Among the heathens, and also among many depraved Jews, a man might divorce his wife if she displeased him even in the dressing of his victuals. Moses permitted divorces in some cases, on account of the stubbornness of his people; but, in process of time, the Jews solicited and obtained them on the most trifling occasions. It is not to be wondered at, if, in those times there were few happy marriages. Where separations were easily obtained, neither the husband nor wife was anxious to please the other; nor could parents, who were likely to separate, unite cordially in the education of their children. A just sense of the divine attributes, is a powerful preventive of the crime of adultery; a crime so black, as, in certain cases, in the eye of the law, to excuse the murder of the person who is guilty of it. This crime being always committed in secret, is best prevented by the dread of a power who sees in secret. Christianity prohibits the infidelity of the husband, and does not allow him any privilege it withholds from his wife.

Christianity greatly improves the condition of females. The Asiatic nations always felt the passion of love, without any esteem for the object; and made quick transitions

from adoration to jealousy, to indifference, or to contempt. In the purest ages of Greece and Rome, it was lawful to put female infants to death; and, on the decline of the Romish empire, heathen matrons were degraded creatures. According to the system of oppression, which generally prevailed when the gospel was promulgated, the husband, instead of being the friend of his wife, was a tyrant over her; and the wife as might naturally be expected, obeyed from a principle of fear, not of love, gratitude, or a sense of duty. In those days, wives were exhorted to bear patiently the infidelity of their husbands, since the privilege of fornication was allowed to men but not to women.—But the Scriptures consider woman as a rational being, the moral companion of man, bound to the same duties, and entitled to the same rewards. The pagan female sometimes retained her influence during youth and beauty, while a christian woman, who is held in respect for her sense and virtue, may preserve that respect though old or deformed. Christianity tends to render females rational, chaste, desirable; discourages impurity and fornication, those preventives of matrimony; and concubinage, adultery, and polygamy, those never-failing sources of jealousy and discontent.

Christianity has reclaimed dissolute men. It is impossible to furnish a stronger instance of vile profligacy and sincere repentance, than in the Earl of Rochester. He was depraved in his principles and morals, a professed unbeliever, and employed his time and talents in blasphemous and obscene writings, in drunken gaiety, and in gross sensuality, which, at the age of thirty one, and two years before his death, reduced him to a state of weakness and decay. At this age he was acquainted with Dr. Burnet, and from whom he received such a conviction of the truth of christianity, and of moral obligation, that he expressed a veneration for the Holy Scriptures, and resolved to read them frequently: for, having spoken to his heart, he acknowledged that all the seeming absurdities in them vanished, and that he was now sensible of their beauty and excellence.—And that his repentance and conversion were real, appears evident from his subsequent life; which, though

short, was truly christian. A few days before his death, he thus expressed himself : *I shall now die, but, O ! what unspeakable glories do I see ! I am assured of God's mercy to me through Christ. O ! how I long to die, and be with my Saviour.* And thus dying,

His languishing head is at rest,
Its thinking and aching are o'er ;
The quiet, immoveable breast
Is heav'd by affliction no more.
His heart is no longer the seat
Of trouble, and torturing pain ;
It ceases to flutter and beat,
It never shall flutter again.

WESLEY.

CHAP. IX.

The subject continued.

—Religion ! oh thou Cherub ! heavenly bright,
Oh joys unmix'd and fathomless delight !
Thou, thou art all !—

YOUNG.

Pure religion abolishes human sacrifices. The history of almost every heathen nation evinces, that gentilism was productive of human sacrifices, not only in barbarous countries, but in Greece and Rome, as well as other civilized states. It is well known that several ancient nations offered human victims, to appease the gods, to recover health, to drive away famine, to avert storms, to obtain success in war, in ratifying treaties, in compounding philtres, and in magical rites in honour of the devil. The heathens committed numerous acts of cruelties. Such acts of cruelty were exploded by the gospel and its professors.

In many heathen nations it was allowed to destroy the

fœtus in the womb, to strangle or drown new-born infants, or to expose them to the sea-shore, or in some corner where they were left to perish by cold or hunger, or to be destroyed by the wild beasts. It was especially common for all infants pronounced deformed or defective to be destroyed. And female infants were less commiserated than males. Hence it was a rule, that "A man though poor, will not expose a son; but if rich, he will scarcely preserve a daughter." Hence the christian institution well deserves the regard of those individuals, who otherwise would have fallen sacrifices to deformity or weakness; and also, the public regard, by preserving many deformed or feeble men, who have been highly useful or ornamental to society.

The most ancient Greeks and Romans discouraged self-murder. The former suffered the bodies of suicides to be buried, but not burned; while the latter not only refused them inhumation, but ordered that they should be exposed on a cross, and left there to rot, or be devoured by beasts of prey. But in succeeding ages this punishment was rarely inflicted, except on criminals, who put themselves to death to escape the penalties of the law. A man who endured any mental or corporeal affliction might obtain from the senate permission to dispatch himself, with an exemption from any insult to his corpse, or any aspersion on his name. The widows of the ancient Indians voluntarily burned themselves, to accompany their deceased husbands, nor is the abominable custom abolished to this day in the empire of Indostan. The scripture doctrine of futurity, when duly inculcated, must have removed those erroneous and mischievous opinions, by declaring, that, in the next world, *they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, and that its pleasures are such as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive.* But the real christian is so far from putting an end to his life in consequence of trouble or disappointment, that he bears his afflictions with calm submission to the will and disposal of him, who is too wise to err, and too good to be unkind.— If his sufferings are in consequence of his attachment to the Saviour, he bears them patiently, from a certainty of a re-

ward; if they are the effects of his vices, he receives them with humility, as chastisements of his offences; and if they arise from the faults of others, he considers them as trials of his patience and forgiveness. The heathen who wanted such motives, frequently put themselves to death, and they were infinitely more excusable than modern self-murderers. When a heathen murdered himself, he neither violated the laws of his religion nor his country; but a modern self-murderer, generally speaking, does both. The law of England is well calculated to prevent this crime, as it grants to the King, the goods and chattles of the *felo-de-se*, and requires his body to be buried in the high-way, transfixed with a stake. But this law is shamefully eluded by Coroners, who return verdicts of Lunacy against the self-murderer, and humanely perjure themselves for the benefit of his relatives;

I grant the deed
Is madness; but the madness of the heart.
And what is that? our utmost bound of guilt
The bold to break
Heaven's law supreme, and desperately rush
Thro' sacred nature's murder, on their own,
Because they never think of death, they die.

DR. YOUNG.

CHAP. X.

Christianity discourages Duels.

There were few customs among the ancients more absurd than that of single combat, for deciding doubtful or disputed points. The Turks, Germans, Saxons, Danes, and other ancient nations, employed this method to prove their innocence, and to determine the justice or in-

justice of their cause, and imagined that God would interpose miraculously, to decide who was innocent or guilty, just or unjust.

To chuse to determine points by single combat, rather than to refer them to the judgment of the magistrate, is to be condemned : as being a derogation from his authority, or opposition to his determination, as well as a rash exposing of our own lives or that of others, and a probable means of being detrimental to the lives and souls of many, who might otherwise be useful in various ways.

Duelling as a punishment is absurd ; because it is an equal chance, whether the punishment fall on the offender, or person offended. Nor is it much better as a reparation ; it being difficult to explain in what the *satisfaction* consists, or how it tends to undo the injury, or to afford a compensation for the damage already sustained.

Murder is forbidden ; and wherever human life is deliberately taken away, otherwise than by public authority, there is murder. The value and security of human life make this rule necessary ; for I do not see what other idea or definition of murder can be admitted, which will not let in so much private violence, as to render society a scene of peril and bloodshed.

Take away the circumstance of the duellist's exposing his own life, and it becomes assassination ; add this circumstance, and what difference does it make ?

In expostulating with the duellist, I all along suppose his adversary to fall. Which supposition I am at liberty to make, because if he have no right to kill his adversary, he has none to attempt it.

The insufficiency of the redress which the law of the land affords, for those injuries which chiefly affect a man in his sensibility and reputation, tempts many to redress themselves. Prosecution for such offences, by the trifling damages that are recovered, serve only to make the sufferer more ridiculous.—This ought to be remedied. Beside, duelling, as the law now stands, can seldom be overtaken by legal punishment. The challenge, appointment, and other previous circumstances, which indicate the intention

with which the combatants met, being surprised, nothing appears to a court of justice, but the actual rencounter ; and if a person be slain when actually fighting with his adversary, the law deems his death nothing more than manslaughter.

It is strange, that fighting should be considered a proof of the truth, honour, or honesty of the duellist : a man may possess personal courage without another good quality.—The liar, the knave, the seducer of his friend's wife, will fight : He who was a villain before he fought, will still be a villain, and generally a greater villain than if he had declined the combat.

Colonel GARDNER, who was as distinguished for valour as for piety, declined a duel, observing to the person who brought the challenge—*I am really afraid of sinning, but you know I am not afraid of fighting.*

The general practice of duelling among the higher order of society, is a sure indication that a spirit of infidelity is alarmingly gone abroad. A *Christian* fight a duel ? Impossible ! True valour forbids it. And, to mend the matter, upon the Lord's day too ! Still more impossible ! Every principle of his religion prohibits the infamous deed.

DISSERTATION VII.

CHAP. I.

On Man.

Know then thyself, presume not God to scan ;
The proper study of mankind is man.

POPE.

It has been erroneously supposed, and therefore improperly asserted, that ignorance is the mother of devotion :

this is so far from being founded in fact, that she is the mother of superstition and idolatry.

A desire of knowledge is natural to the mind of man ; and nothing discovers the true quality and disposition of the mind more, than the particular kind of knowledge of which it is most fond.

Thus we see that low and little minds are most delighted with the knowledge of trifles ; as in children ; an indolent mind with that which serves only for amusement, or the entertainment of the fancy : a curious mind is best pleased with facts : a judicious penetrating mind, with demonstration, and mathematical science : a worldly mind esteems no knowledge like that of the world : but a wise and pious man, before all other kinds of knowledge, prefers that of God and his own soul. But some kind of knowledge or other the mind is continually craving after : and by considering what that is, its prevailing turn and temper may easily be known.

And of all the subjects which engage the attention, and employ the contemplation of man, there is none either more extensive or important than a knowledge of himself.—*Know thyself*, is one of the most useful and comprehensive precepts in the whole moral system : and it is well known in how great a veneration this maxim was held by the ancients.

But it is to be greatly lamented, that there is not any thing, in which men are more deficient than a knowledge of their own characters. Is it not strange that this science is so generally neglected ? We spend a great deal of time in learning useless things, but take no pains in the study of ourselves.

The creation of Man.

Man was made last of all the creatures, being the chief and master-piece of the whole creation on earth. He is a compendium of the creation, and therefore is sometimes called a *microcosm*, a little world, the world in miniature ; something of the vegetable, animal, and rational world

meet in him ; spirit and matter ; yea, heaven and earth centre in him ; he is the bond that connects them both together. The constituent and essential parts of man created by God are two ; body and soul. The one was made out of the dust, the other was breathed into him. The body is formed with the greatest precision and exactness. The members of the human body are various, and minister to many different purposes.—They are very numerous nearly ten thousand ; yet all vitally and intimately united and connected to each other ; so that every muscle, vein, artery, yea, the least fibre is in its proper place.

I am unwilling to proceed without taking occasion from hence to observe, that man is entirely dependent upon his Creator for the preservation of his body : and that this relation of dependence, which subsists between the Creator and his creatures, is an eternal relation. That world, into which we enter when we die, is a part of his empire. If this be not sufficient to make us feel all our dependence, we may add another, namely, that what we enjoy is not ours. He has attached our felicity to one fibre, to one caprice, to one grain of sand. On what is our high idea of ourselves founded ?—on our genius ? And what is necessary to reduce the finest genius to a state of melancholy and madness ? Must the earth quake ? Must the sea overflow its banks ? No ; there needs nothing but the displacing one little fibre in your brain. On what is your idea of self-complacence founded, which fortune, rank, and pleasing objects that surround you, seem to contribute to excite ? And what is necessary to dissipate your self-complacence ? Must heaven arm itself with thunder and lightning ? Must all nature be shaken ? No ; one caprice is sufficient. On what is your lofty idea of yourself founded ? On your health ? But what is necessary to deprive you of your health ? Earthquakes ? No ; one grain of sand is sufficient.

God who is the living fountain of all perfection, spent an eternity in the contemplation of his own excellencies, before any creature was made. In the moment appointed by his own wisdom, he gave the first being to the world.

Three distinct orders of natures he formed, the one purely spiritual, (d) the other purely material, and between both one mixed, which unites the extremes in itself. This is man, the abridgment of the universe, allied to the angels in his soul, and to material things in his body, and capable of the happiness of both ; by his internal faculties enjoying intellectual, and by his external, tasting the pleasures of the sensitive world.

Man was made last of the creatures, that it might not be suspected that he had been a helper in the work of creation ; that question must be for ever mortifying to man, *Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth ?* Yet it was both an honour and a favour that he was made last : an honour, for the method of creation was to advance from that which was less perfect, to that which was more so ; and a favour, for it was not fit that he should be lodged in the palace designed for him, until it was completely prepared for his reception. Man was made the same day that the beasts were, because his body was made of the same earth with their's, and while he is in the body he inhabits the same earth with them. God grant that by indulging the desires of it, we may not make ourselves like the beasts that perish !

(d) Whether angels are pure spirits divested of all matter, or united to some thin bodies, or corporeal vehicles, has been a controversy of long standing: the more general opinion is, that they are substances entirely spiritual, though they can at any time assume bodies, and appear in human shape.

CHAP. II.

Man's primitive State.

How complicate ! how wonderful is man !
 How passing wonder HE who made him such !

Dr. YOUNG.

The works of God are beautiful in their appearance, regular in their motions, and useful in their various operations. To contemplate them frequently is both an important duty, and a source of delight. *The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all those that have pleasure therein. He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered.*

The solemnity with which man was created, proves that he was designed to fill an important place in the newly-created world. A COUNCIL was held: *Let us*, said God, *make man in OUR image.*

Many erroneous opinions have been maintained on man's primitive state. Some have placed him on a level with, if not above, the angels of God ; and others have placed him below many of his descendants. To avoid these wide extremes, we must abide by reason and revelation. Though it is said man was made in the *image* of God ; yet, this expression does not refer to the body of man, which was formed of the dust ; for God is a spirit, and cannot be represented by any material form.

In the beginning God created all things good. Inherently and immutably good himself, every production of his must necessarily be so, according to the several kinds wherein he created them. As man was wholly made by him, he must have been made wholly good ; his nature clear of all impurity, and free from all defect and disorder.

In man's primitive state, his understanding was enriched with knowledge. Nature was unveiled to Adam, he entered into its sanctuary, and discovered its mysterious operations. When the creatures came to pay their homage to him, *whatsoever he called them, that was the name thereof.* And their

names expressed their natures. His knowledge reached through the whole compass of the creation, from the sun the glorious vessel of light, to the glow-worm that shines in the hedge. But man, merely as man, could not originally bring any real knowledge into the world with him.— That must either be communicated, or afterwards acquired by himself, through observation and experience. The latter acquired time to effect it. So that it is reasonable to believe, that this knowledge was not acquired by study, nor was it the fruit of anxious inquiry, but as the illumination of the air is in an instant by the light of the morning, so his understanding was enlightened by a pure beam from the Father of lights.

Besides he had such a knowledge of the Deity, as was sufficient for his duty and felicity. His mind did not stick in the material part of things, but ascended by the several ranks of beings to the universal cause. He discovered the glory of the divine essence and attributes by their wonderful effects. He had clear discoveries :—

1. Of God's power. When he first opened his eyes, the stupendous fabric of heaven and earth presented itself to his view, and in it the most express and clear characters of that glorious power which produced it.

2. Of his admirable wisdom. By considering the order and union, the variety and efficacy, the beauty and stability of the world, he clearly discerned that wisdom which so regularly disposed all. It is thus that wisdom speaks—*When he prepared the heavens, I was there : when he set a compass upon the face of the deep : when he gave the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandments : when he appointed the foundations of the earth ; I was with him, contriving all in the best manner for ornament and use.*

3. His infinite goodness. The goodness of God is that leading attribute, which called forth the rest to work. As there was no matter, so no motive to induce God to make the world, but what arose from his goodness ; for he is an all-sufficient being, perfectly blessed in himself. His majesty is not increased by the adoration of angels, nor his greatness by the obedience of nature ; neither was he less

happy, or content, in that eternal duration before the existence of any creature, than he is since. His original felicity is equally incapable of accession, as of diminution. It is evident therefore, that only free and unexcited goodness moved him to create all things, that he might impart being and happiness to the creature, and not enrich his own.

CHAP. III.

The image of God was resplendent on man's conscience, the seat of practical knowledge and treasury of moral principles. The direct faculty was sincere and uncorrupt, not infected with any disguising tincture : it was clear of all prejudices, which might render it incompetent to judge of good and evil. It instructed man in all the parts of his relative obligations to God, and the creatures. It was not fettered and confined, fearfully restraining from what is lawful ; nor licentious and indulgent in what was forbidden. Briefly, conscience in Adam was upright, was a subordinate God, that gave laws, and exacted obedience to that glorious being who is its superior.

There was a divine impression on his will. Spiritual reason kept the throne, and the inferior faculties observed an easy and regular subordination to its dictates. The affections were exercised with proportion to the quality of their objects. Reason was their inviolable rule, love the most noble, which gives being and goodness to all the rest, even to hatred itself ; (for so much we hate an object, as it hinders our enjoyment of the good we love,) this precious incense was offered up to the excellent and Supreme Being, who was the author of his life.

The image of God was visible, though in an inferior degree, in the excellent disposition of the organs of man's body. His body was formed immediately by God, and so not liable to these defects which proceed from the weakness of second causes. No blemish nor disease, which are the effect and foot-steps of sin, were to be found in him. His health was not a frail inconstant disposition, easily ruined by the jarring elements, but firm and stable. The

humours were in a just temperament, to prevent any distemper which might tend to the dissolution of that excellent frame.

1. The happiness of man, consisted in the knowledge of God. As the desire of knowledge is the most natural to the soul of man, so the obtaining of it produces the most noble and sweetest pleasure. And proportionably to the degrees of excellency that are in objects, so much of rational perfection and satisfaction accrue to the mind by the knowledge of them. The discovery of the works of God greatly affected man, yet the excellencies scattered among them are but an imperfect and mutable shadow of God's infinite and unchangeable perfections.

2. The happiness of man consisted in the love of God. It was not the naked speculation of the Deity, that made him happy, but such a knowledge as revived his affection : for happiness results from the fruitions of all the faculties. Adam, in this state, loved nothing in *comparison* of God, and nothing but in *reference* to him. He had, in his heart, neither love, hope, inclination, desire, nor delight, but as they related to God, and were regulated by him.

God blessed man with dominion: He was appointed as God's lieutenant in the world, and adorned with a flower of his crown. God gave him the solemn investiture of this dignity, when he brought the creatures to receive their names from him, which was a mark of their homage, and a token of his supreme empire to command them by their names.

Thus holy and blessed was Adam in his primitive state. And that he might continue so, he was obliged for ever to obey the will of God, who had bestowed upon him this life and happiness. By the first neglect of his duty he would most justly and inevitably incur the loss of both.

It is scarcely necessary, after what has already been said, to observe that man was completely happy in his primitive state. There was nothing to make him unhappy. All without was beautiful, and all within was pure. God delighted in him—the creatures paid him homage—the earth produced every tree that was pleasant to the eye, and good

for food. Oh ! lovely Eden, where innocence and happiness grew up together ! Within thy sacred enclosure there was no sorrow—no pain—no crying—no death !

The original state of man reflects the highest honour upon God. Here we behold an astonishing display of divine wisdom, power, goodness, purity and love. If the glory be departed, let man bear the blame—let him be ashamed—let him be punished, for the awful change took place through his transgression. God intended him to continue as he made him. He gave him power to stand, but left him free to fall.

There is another Eden far above the skies, where human nature is exalted to a state of inconceivable perfection.—The subtle temper has no access to that delightful paradise. There the states of the just are *confirmed* in a state of everlasting happiness and glory. Jesus, the second Adam—the Lord from heaven dwells amongst them ; and it would be as easy to shake the throne of God, as to disturb or interrupt their felicity. God has crowned them with immortality, and their happiness and glory will continue as long as eternal ages roll.

The saints in his presence receive
Their great and eternal reward ;
In Jesus, in heaven they live ;
They reign in the smile of their Lord !
The flame of angelical love,
Is kindled at Jesus's face ;
And all the enjoyment above
Consists in the rapturous gaze.

WESLEY.

Every man on earth should bend his course to this happy world. The way to it is open and plain. All may enter in at the straight gate and walk in the narrow way which leads to life. God graciously invites us to it and condescendingly affords us all the help we need.

DISSERTATION VIII.

CHAP. I.

The Fall of Man.

Of Man's first disobedience, and the fruit
Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste
Brought death into the world, and all our woe,
With loss of Eden, —————

MILTON.

That man once enjoyed a state of greater happiness and moral rectitude than at present, is positively asserted, and satisfactorily proved in the Holy Bible. And there is reason to suppose that many of the heathens believed this.— And hence their notions of a *Golden Age*.

Many object to the *Mosaic* account of the fall as absurd ; not only as it represents God as suspending the happiness of mankind on so indifferent a circumstance as the eating of the fruit ; but also supposes a brute to speak, and yet *Eve* to have no alarm at it, and out of regard to what such a creature said to have violated the divine command, and to have been guilty of a weakness, when in the perfection of human nature, of which few of her descendants in the present degeneracy of it would be capable.

As to the offence in question, it may be shewn elsewhere, that how light soever it might be in itself, there were circumstances of most enormous aggravation attending it, which might abundantly justify God in the punishment inflicted on account of it. As to the latter part of the objection, which is indeed the chief difficulty, some have replied that the serpent only spoke by his actions, *eating* the fruit in the presence of *Eve*, and seeming rather refreshed and animated than injured by it. But we waive this ; nor do we chuse to say with Mr. JOSEPH MEDD, that she took the serpent for a wise though fallen *Angel*, who might know more of this new formed world than she, and could have

no principle of enmity against her, to lead him to wish her destruction. Neither do we say with Dr. THOMAS BURNET at BOYLE's Lectures, that she took him for some attendant spirit, sent from God to revoke the prohibition before given. It seems more probable that the fact might be, as is beautifully represented by MILTON, i. e. that the serpent, being actuated by an evil spirit, might pretend to have gained reason and speech by that fruit, and from thence might infer with some plausible appearance of argument, that if it was capable of producing so wonderful a change in *him*, it might exalt the *human* nature to *divinity*.

The fall of man, or the doctrine of original sin, is a most important and necessary doctrine. The whole religion of the bible supposes it, requires it, and is built upon it; and it is so much a first principle, that he who will not learn this, can learn nothing else to make him wise to salvation. He, who knows not that *the imagination of his heart is evil from his youth*, has not yet begun any religion that will be of service to him.

Original sin is that whereby our whole nature is corrupted, and rendered contrary to the law of God; or, according to the 9th article of the Church of England, "It is that whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is, of his own nature, inclined to evil." Man is now so far removed from God, that he scarcely retains any feeble glimmer of the Author of his being, so much has all knowledge been lost or confused. His senses now, being not the servants, but masters of his reason, have led him away in the pursuit of pleasure: all the creatures with which he is surrounded, either tempt or afflict him, and exercise a kind of sovereignty over him: either subduing him by their strength, or seducing him by their charms, which is the more imperious and fatal dominion of the two.

Some deny man's depravity; and contend that we are naturally virtuous, or at least as much inclined to good as evil. But if this be the fact; why do we *need* so many hindrances to restrain us from evil, and so many endeavours to excite us to good? And why are they *ineffectual* too? They ought, upon this principle, to be successful with the

majority, or at least, an equal number of mankind. But are they? Do we not see men generally breaking through every restraint, and disregarding every kind of instruction and reproof? And are not they who walk by the rule of God's word, a *peculiar* people?

CHAP. II.

Man's fall was voluntary.

----- Whose fault?
Whose but his own? Ingrate, he had of me
All he could have; I made him just and right,
Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall.

MILTON.

In such language the Almighty is represented as speaking, in reference to Man's fall. Man was created perfectly holy, but in a mutable state. He was invested with power to prevent his falling, yet under a possibility of it. He was complete in his own order, but receptive of sinful impressions.

Had man kept in obedience to his heavenly guide, and rejected the efforts of the tempter, he might undoubtedly, in due time, have been advanced to a degree of establishment beyond all possibility of falling; but not continuing upon his watch, and, contrary to the warning before given him, turning his attention towards the temptation, when alluringly presented, he fell into the bondage of corruption; a sure introduction to misery. For as holiness and happiness are inseparably united, so sin and misery are individually connected.

That Adam, during his innocence had a sufficient power to persevere in his holy state, is, I think, sufficiently plain. There was no subtraction of any grace which was requisite to his standing; he left God before he was forsaken

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by him. Much less was there any internal impulsion from God. It is inconsistent with the divine purity to incline the creature to sin : as God cannot be tempted to evil, neither tempts he any man. It is injurious to his wisdom to suppose, that God would spoil that work which he had composed with so much design and counsel. And it is dishonourable to his goodness ; he loved his creature, and love is an inclination to do good ; it was impossible therefore for God to induce man to sin, or to withdraw that power which was necessary to resist temptation, when the consequence must be his inevitable ruin. So that men cannot "accuse

Their Maker, or their making, or their fate,
As if predestination overruled
Their will, disposed by absolute decree
Or high foreknowledge ; they themselves decreed
Their own revolt, not I : if I foreknew,
Foreknowledge had no influence on their fault,
Which had no less proved certain unforeknown."

MILTON.

The enemy of man could only allure, he could not ravish his consent. Though his malice is infinite, yet his power is restrained, that he cannot fasten on immediate, much less an irresistible impression on the will. The enemy therefore, made use of an external object to invite man. Now objects have no constraining force, they are but partial agents, and derive all their efficacy from the faculties to which they are agreeable. And although since sin hath disordered the flesh, there is difficulty in restraining those objects, which pleasantly insinuate themselves, yet such a universal rectitude was in Adam, and so entire a subjection in the sensual appetites to the superior power of reason, that he might have obtained an easy conquest.

It will fully appear that the disobedience was voluntary, by considering what denominates an action to be so. The two springs of human actions are the understanding and the will ; and as there is no particular good but may have the appearance of some difficult unpleasant quality annexed, upon which account the will may reject it ; so any particular evil may be so disguised by the false lustre of good-

ness, as to incline the will to receive it. This is clearly verified in Adam's fall. For a specious object was conveyed through the unguarded sense to his fancy, and from that to his understanding, which, by a vicious carelessness, neglecting to consider, or judging that the end did outweigh the evil of the means, commended it to the will, and that resolved to embrace it. It is evident therefore, that the action which resulted from the direction of the mind, and the choice of the will, was absolutely free.

Suppose the devil had so disguised the temptation, that notwithstanding all circumspection and care, Adam could not have discovered its evil; his invincible ignorance had rendered the action involuntary: but Adam was conscious of his own action; there was light in his mind to discern the evil, and strength in his will to decline it.

Or suppose he had been tried by torments, the extremity and continuance of which, had vehemently oppressed his nature; this had only extenuated the guilt, the action had still been voluntary. But this was not Adam's case; the devil had no power over him, as over Job, to disturb his felicity, he prevailed by a simple suasion. If it should be asked, what is the *cause* of evil in the world? We answer—We must allow, that God, who is infinite in holiness, purity, and goodness, could not have done it. *Nothing can produce what is not in itself.* This is a maxim to which every man subscribes as soon as he sees or hears it; and to which we, before, have had occasion to allude. God then could not have produced *sin*, forasmuch as his nature is infinite goodness and holiness. We have already asserted, and perhaps we have proved, that he made man in his own image, a transcript of his own purity, and since sin entered into the world, he has done every thing consistent with his own perfections, and the freedom of the human mind, to drive it out; and to make and keep man holy.

After a thousand volumes are written on the origin of evil, we shall just know as much as God, in his word, has told—*An enemy has done it; and this enemy is the devil.*—Matt. xiii. 39.

But *why* was evil permitted to enter into the world?—

There are doubtless sufficient reasons in the divine Mind, for its *permission* ; which, connected with his infinite essence, and extending to eternity, are not only unfathomable by us, but also, from their nature, incommunicable to men. But it may be justly said, that hereby many attributes of the Divine Nature become manifest, which otherwise could not have been known ; such as mercy, compassion, long-suffering, &c.

CHAP. III.

Some of the Consequences of Man's Fall.

This soul degenerated from its purity ; the faculties remained, but the moral perfections were lost, wherein the brightness of God's image was most conspicuous. The holy wisdom of his mind, the divine love, that sanctified his will, the spiritual power, to obey God, were totally quenched. How is man disfigured by the fall ! He is defiled with the filthiness of flesh and spirit ; he is ashamed at the sight of his own nakedness that reproached him for his crime.

He was deprived of his dominion and liberty. The light of the understanding was much impaired ; the will in some senses, hath lost its true freedom ; a furious disorder is in the affections the restraint of reason to check their violent course, provokes them to swell higher, and to be more impetuous.

The senses, whose office is to be the intelligencers of the soul, to make discovery, and to give a naked report, without disturbing the higher faculties, they sometimes mistake disguised enemies for friends ; and sometimes by a false alarm move the lower appetites, and fill the soul with disorder and confusion, that the voice of reason can-

not be heard. By the irritation of grief, the insinuation of pleasure, or some other perturbation, the soul is captivated and wounded through the senses. In short, when man turned rebel to God, he became a slave to all the creatures. Deplorable degradation ! and worthy of the deepest shame and sorrow.

Seriously consider your present state. You have forsaken God your Maker—you have, perhaps, no desire to return—you have, no power of yourselves to return—nor have you the means of returning, unless God in great mercy afford those means. But what reason have you to hope for mercy ? Will God be merciful unto you ? Not while you live in wilful sin. But earnestly seek salvation through Jesus Christ. *He came into the world to seek and to save that which was lost.* But *when* are you to seek this salvation ? *Now.* For what says the Scripture ? It says, *Behold, now is the accepted time ; behold, now is the day of salvation.*

1. Consider the true character of sin.—It is of the greatest importance to entertain proper apprehensions of the evil of sin. Hence the scriptures are so large and particular in describing it. They place it before us in every quality, and express it under every allusion that can rouse our indignation, or awaken our fear or our flight.

2. Consider what the world has gained by sin; rather what the men of the world have lost in consequence of it. Read the history of wicked nations, families, individuals.—What does the sinner ever gain or enjoy ? What that is valuable or satisfactory ? What that even corresponds with his own expectation ?—Sin is deceitful ;—it attracts by flattery ; it destroys by delusion.

3. Permit me to ask, what has sin done for you ? What has it done for your connexions, for your bodies, your souls, your reputation, your property ? Let the sinner consider his weary steps ; his mean condescensions, and compliances ; his corroding anxieties, and suspicions ; his restless desires and tormenting fears—when under the dominion of some lust or passion—to gain a fancy or a feather ; to acquire the opinion of some poor worm ; to pick up a little shining dust, to enjoy some light, unsatisfying,

and low indulgence—and will he not confess that these things are more than unprofitable and vain?

4. Does not a life of irreligion prove degrading to any man. There is nothing so shameful, so scandalous as sin. Whatever be a man's station, or office, or abilities, sin degrades all and renders him vile. It is not a shame to be obliged to labour; it is not scandalous to be poor and dependent; it is not disgraceful to be tried and distressed—but it is shameful, scandalous, disgraceful to be a sinner.—Pray that God may save you from sin. Then shall it be well with you, in time and in eternity. Amen.

DISSERTATION IX.

CHAP. I.

The Immortality of the Soul.

Who tells me he denies his soul immortal,
Whate'er his boast, has told me, he's a knave.

DR. YOUNG.

It has been said that many of the Greek writers, frequently considered man as composed of *three* parts, *spirit, soul and body*. And it has been supposed that St. Paul alluded to this which was then the prevailing opinion, in his first epistle to the Thess. where he says, *May the very God of Peace scantify you wholly: and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body. be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ*. But did not the Apostle, in these words, mean, by the word *spirit*, the spiritual estate of the persons to whom he wrote? praying that the Spirit of God, with his various graces, might preserve them whole and entire. That man, strictly speaking, cannot consist of three parts appears hence, the soul is either

matter or not matter, there is no medium : but if it be matter it is part of the body ; if not matter, it coincides with the spirit.

The immortality of the soul, is a thing which so deeply, so infinitely concerns us, that we must have utterly lost all feeling, to be cold and indifferent about it. All our actions and thoughts must take so very different a course, according as eternal blessings may, or may not be expected, that it is impossible for us to proceed with judgment and discretion, except we keep this point, which ought ever to be our ultimate object, continually in view.

This is a doctrine which, in importance, ranks next to the being of God. Though the body dies, the soul dies not ; it survives the body, and not only lives after it, but lives for ever, it never dies : though the body without the soul is dead. yet the soul without the body is not dead.

When it is said the soul is immortal, it must be understood that it is so in its own nature ; and is not liable to death either from any thing within itself, or without it : but not that it hath such an immortality as God himself has, *who only hath immortality* ; he has it of himself. Angels, and the souls of men, have their immortality of him, who has made them immaterial and immortal spirits ; his immortality is without beginning, and any prior cause of it ; their's has a beginning and that beginning is from God : his is independent ; their's depends on him, *in whom they live, and move, and have their being.*

It is well known that matter, however modified, can neither reason, perceive, nor will ; hence, that being in man which is endowed with these powers, must be distinct from the body, and it can have no principles which tend to corruption. That the nature of the soul is immaterial, which, though not absolutely necessary to the eternity of its duration, has, I think, been evinced to almost a demonstration. The soul, in its nature, is apiritual, of the same nature with angels, who are made spirits, spiritual substances. Matter is divisible, discernible, may be cut to pieces : not so the soul ; it is out of the reach of every slaughtering weapon.

The powers of reason, perception, and volition, being independent of sensation, as appears from the phenomenon of dreaming, prove in the opinion of many, that the soul may exercise all these powers when the senses are dissolved; and consequently, that it is capable of an immortal existence.

Perhaps the immortality of the soul may be proved, from the providence of God concerned in the distribution and disposal of things in this life, which is oftentimes very unequal; wicked men prosper and good men are greatly afflicted, and therefore, if they had hope in this life only, they would be of all men most miserable. Little children suffer also both pain and death, and it seems highly improbable, that the God of infinite felicity should have created these amiable beings for the sole purpose of suffering exquisite misery. That he should have made a difference in the distribution of temporal and intellectual endowments, is agreeable to reason; but, that he should really afflict the innocent, and prosper the guilty, seems, in a moral view, to require a future state of rewards and punishments, in which he will clear up the obscurity of providence, and discover the equity of his ways.

The love of immortality, which all men feel, especially good men, attaches a strong probability to the doctrine of a future state: God having formed the eye for vision, gratifies it with a world of sublime and beautiful objects; and having formed this love of immortality, the strongest of our propensities, we have the justest ground of confidence that he will so gratify it.

CHAP. II.

"I'll praise my Maker while I've breath,
And when my voice is lost in death,
Praise shall employ my nobler powers:
My days of praise shall ne'er be past,
While life, and thought, and being last,
Or immortality endures."

The dissolution of the body affords no just grounds for

believing, that the soul dies when the body dies. It is true, the soul and the body are at present united by the closest sympathy. When the one suffers, the other is affected. Both seem to grow up to the maturity of their powers together ; and together both seem often to decay. Such a shock is apparently suffered by the soul at death, as at first view might lead us to suspect it was sharing the same fate with the body. As long as by the ordination of the Creator these different substances remain united, there is no wonder that the one should suffer from the disorder or indisposition of the other. However, the soul and the body are substances of different and dissimilar natures. This being admitted, it clearly follows, that since *thought* depends not on matter, from the dissolution of the material part we have no ground to infer the destruction of the thinking part of man.

It is so far from following that the soul must cease to act on the dissolution of the body, that it seems rather to follow, that it will then act in a more perfect manner. In its present habitation it is plainly limited and confined in its operations. When it is let loose from the body it is brought forth into greater liberty.

These imperfect hints are much strengthened by the belief, that has ever prevailed among all mankind, of the soul's immortality. Never was there a nation discovered on the face of the earth so rude and barbarous, that in the midst of their wildest superstitions there was not cherished among them *some* expectation of a state after death, in which the virtuous were to enjoy happiness.

If the soul of man were to die when the body dies, man would be made in vain, which cannot be said of any other creature. All the other works of God are contrived to answer exactly the purposes for which they were made. Their powers are perfectly suited and adjusted to their condition. But it is not so with man. He has every appearance of being formed for something greater than he here attains.

We see, then, that among the arguments which have been brought forward, to prove the immortality of the

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soul, are to be included, its vast capacities, boundless desires, dissatisfaction with its present state; the consent of all nations; the consciousness that men have of sinning; the sting of conscience; the justice and providence of God. How far these arguments are conclusive, I will not say. One thing, however may be said with safety, that the reasonings which have been adduced to prove the immortality of the soul and a future state, are of considerable weight, yet reasonings still they are, and no more, and in every human reasoning, suspicions may arise of some fallacy or error. In a point so momentous to us, as our existence after death, we never could with absolute certainty and full satisfaction, have rested on any evidence except what was confirmed by God himself.—For many and high blessings we are indebted to the christian revelation; for none more than for its having brought *life and IMMORTALITY to light*. The revelations made by God to the world in early ages, gave the first openings to this great article of faith and hope. In future periods the light dawned more and more: but it was not until the Sun of Righteousness arose, by the appearance of Christ on earth, that the great discovery was completed.

I recommend to the serious perusal of the reader, the following passages of Holy Writ, as a very few of the many passages which might be adduced in support of the soul's immortality.

*Matt. x. 28. Matt. xxv. 46. Dan. xii. 2.
2 Tim. i. 10. 1 Thess. iv. 17, 18. John x. 28.*

— Whence this pleasing hope, this fond desire,
This *longing after immortality*?
Or, whence this *secret dread* and inward horror,
Of falling into nought?
'Tis the *Divinity* that *stirs within us*:
'Tis *heaven* itself that points out an hereafter,
And intimates *Eternity* to man. —

The soul shall flourish in *immortal youth*,
Unhurt, amidst the war of elements,
The wreck of matter, and the crush of worlds.

ADDISON.

From what has been said, we see that it is of great importance, that we have the distinction between the soul and the body deeply imprinted on our minds : Few things in religion or morals are entitled to make a stronger impression than this distinction ; and yet, with the bulk of men, the impression it makes appears to be slight. They seem to think and act as if they consisted of no more than mere flesh and blood, and had no other concerns than what respect their embodied state. If their health be firm, if their senses be gratified, and their appetites indulged all is well with them.

Ought not the doctrine of the soul's immortality, produce in our hearts the most lasting gratitude, love and reverence, towards the great Benefactor of mankind, who hath not only made known and published a future state to the righteous, but by his great undertaking for their redemption hath erected in their behalf *a house in the heavens*.

If our souls be immortal, let us conduct ourselves as becomes those who have an interest in a happiness beyond the grave. If this life be a state of probation for that which is to come, if every action be connected with everlasting happiness or misery, how careful should we be to abstain from evil, how pure, correct, and dignified our behaviour should be in every situation ; how vigilant to do good, and how emulous to prepare the soul for the exalted happiness of a future world ! That happiness which is not like the *transitory* pleasures of this world, but is complete and immortal.

Oh ye blest scenes of permanent delight !
 Full above measure ! lasting beyond bounds !
 A *perpetuity* of bliss, is bliss !
 Could ye, so rich in raptures, fear an end,
 That ghastly thought would drink up all your joy,
 And quite unparadise the realms of bliss !

DR. YOUNG.

DISSERTATION X.

*The Doctrine of the Trinity.**Difficilia quæ pulchra.*

CHAP. I.

The doctrine of the *Trinity* is of so much importance, that real religion is founded upon it : for what is christianity but a manifestation of the three Divine Persons, as engaged in the great work of man's redemption, begun, continued, and to be ended by them, in their several relations of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost ; Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, three Persons, one God ? If there be no *Son* of God where is our Redemption ? If there be no *Holy Spirit* where is our sanctification ? Without both, where is our *salvation* ?

The doctrine of the *Trinity* is rejected by some because the word *Trinity* is not in the Scriptures. But terms or phrases of the same import are there, and this is satisfactory to a person who is candid, and disposed to receive the truth. The word *subsistence*, some say, may be more scriptural, as to phraseology ; but the Greek word *upostasis*, by our translators is rendered *Person* ; and *upostasis*, *substance*, *faith is the substance of things hoped for*. The Greek commentators, taking the word in its etymological meaning, says a very able critic, explain the clause thus : Faith gives a present *subsistence* to the future things that are hoped for. So the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, are the three subsistences in the Unity of the Divine Essence. And it could easily be shewn, that these subsistences were soon called *Persons*. But still says a writer on this subject, " I dare not insist upon any one's using the word *Trinity* or *Person*. I use them myself without any scruple, because I know of none better. But if any man have any scruple concerning them, who shall constrain him to use them ?" If a man prefer using the terms Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, who will dispute

with him on that account, or say unto him, *What doest thou?*

But it has been further objected against the doctrine of the *Trinity*, that it is mysterious, exceeding the reach of the human understanding, and therefore should be exploded from every system of religion. It is allowed that the *modus existendi*, (or manner of existence) of the Trinity cannot be comprehended by finite beings, because it is not revealed, and therefore is a subject on which the understanding cannot properly be exercised; and, consequently, remains at present an inexplicable mystery: but the *fact* is recorded by the pen of divine inspiration, and therefore should be credited. *Gen. i. 28 Gen. ii. 6. 7 Isa. xlviii. 16. Isa. xxxiv. 16. 2 Cor. xiii. 14 John. xiv. 23. Matt. xxiii. 19. 2 Thess. iii. 3 1 John v. 7. Acts. v. 3, 4.*

CHAP. II.

It has been asserted that where mystery begins, religion ends. But this is so far from being true, that religion, even what is called natural religion, *begins* with a mystery, with the greatest of all mysteries, the self-existence and eternity of God. Let any one tell us how an eternity can be past, unless it was once present, and how that can be once present which never had a beginning.

That the doctrine of the *Trinity* is a mysterious doctrine we do not deny: but it is no more so than many other doctrines of the christian revelation, which we all admit, and which we cannot reject without subverting the foundation, and destroying the very substance and essence of our religion. We cannot carefully examine the grounds which establish the truth of the christian religion, without being convinced, that the same principles establish the doctrine for which we are now contending. The miraculous birth and incarnation of our blessed Lord, his union of the human nature with the divine, his redemption of mankind, and his expiation of their sins upon the Cross: these are doctrines plainly taught in the scriptures, and yet as incom-

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To object, then, against the doctrine of the *Trinity*, because of its mysteriousness, shews great imbecility of mind. If the *works* of God do very far exceed the comprehension of the most capacious and penetrating human intellect; shall we suppose that his *infinite nature* is without mystery, and within the grasp of a *finite* understanding.

On finding the doctrine of the ever blessed *Trinity* is declared in the scriptures, though its *mode* may perplex and confound our reasoning powers, it is our duty to receive it on the authority of the Revealer; and, while we are destitute of the means to assist us to fathom so great a mystery, in the spirit of humble adoration and supreme love, we should exclaim—*O the depth!* But it is the misfortune, I ought to have said, the sin of man, that too often his ways are not as God's ways, nor are his thoughts as God's thoughts. God is pleased to reveal the *fact*; man insists upon apprehending the *mode*: in his present state he *cannot* apprehend it; he therefore denies the fact and commences unbeliever.

But what we contend for is, that these mysteries, although confessedly *above* our reason, are not *contrary* to it. This is a plain and well known distinction, and in the present case an incontrovertible one. No one, for instance, can say, that the supposition of three persons and one God is contrary to reason. We cannot, indeed, *comprehend* such a distinction in the divine nature; but unless we knew *perfectly* what that nature is, it is impossible for man to say that such a distinction may not subsist in it consistent with its unity. The truth is, on a subject where we have no clear ideas at all, our reasoning faculties *must* fail us, and we must be content to submit (as well we may) to the clear and explicit declarations of holy writ.

"The whole intellectual world is full of truths *incomprehensible*, and yet *incontestible*." And the same observation may, under certain limitations, be made concerning the natural world.

The denial of the doctrine of the Trinity, is productive

of awful consequences. It is an error and a crime, committed against the nature of God, who is the only object of religious worship. If he had not deemed the revelation of this fact, necessary for mankind to be acquainted with, he would not have favoured us with it : and, for a person in the face of scripture to contradict it, is a conduct to which great enormity is attached.

Many have ventured to say, that the doctrine of the *Trinity* ought to be ranked with transubstantiation as equally absurd. But such persons will do well to pay some attention to what has been said in answer to this. Archbishop Tillotson, has proved, by arguments the most convincing, that transubstantiation includes the most palpable contradictions ; and that we have the evidence of our *eyes, feeling, and taste*, that what we receive in the Lord's Supper is *bread*, and not the *body of a man* ; whereas we have the testimony of our *eyes* alone that the words "This is my body," are at all in the scripture.

CHAP. III.

The Divinity of Jesus Christ, &c.

The divinity of Jesus Christ, which is a fundamental principle in real religion, has been frequently exposed to the foolish oppositions of the human mind. Men, full of pride, whose mouths ought to be filled with only thanksgivings for the ineffable gift, made to them by the Father of mercies, of his only Son, have continually insulted him by vomiting forth the most impious blasphemies against that adorable Son. (e) Such a conduct is no less unreasonable than

(e) Dr. CLARKE observes, "that two natures are ever to be distinguished in Christ : the human nature, in reference to which he is the *Son of God*, and inferior to him, Mark xiii. 32. John v.

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it is impious. For there is scarcely any thing, of which we can be more certain, than of the divinity of Jesus Christ.

In the commencement of the Gospel by St. John, we are told, that in the beginning was the Word or *Logos*.— This phrase fully proves, in the mouth of an inspired writer, that Jesus Christ was no part of the creation ; as he existed when no part of that existed ; and that consequently he is no creature, as all created nature was formed by him ; for *without him was not any thing made that was made*. Now, as what was *before* creation, must be *eternal*, and as what gave *being* to all things, could not have borrowed or derived its being from *any thing* ; therefore Jesus, who was

19. xiv. 28. and the *divine nature* which was from eternity, and equal to God. John i. l. x. 30. Rom. ix. 5. Col. i. 15—18. It is true that to Jesus Christ, as he appeared among men, every characteristic of the *divine nature* is sometimes attributed, without appearing to make any distinction between the *divine* and *human natures*; but is there any part of the Scriptures in which it is *plainly* said that the *divine nature* of Jesus Christ is the *Son of God* ? Here I trust I may be permitted to say, with all due respect for those who differ from me ; that the doctrine of the *eternal worship* of Christ, is in my opinion, anti-scriptural and highly dangerous ; this doctrine I reject for the following reasons : 1st, I have not been able to find any *express* declaration in the Scripture concerning it. 2dly, If Christ be the Son of God as to his *divine nature*, then he cannot be eternal ; for Son implies *Father* ; and a Father implies in reference to *Son*, precedence in *time*, if not in *nature* too. Father and Son imply the idea of generation ; and generation implies a time in which it was effected, and time also *unprecedented* to such generation. 3dly, If Christ be the Son of God, as to his *divine nature*, the Father is of necessity *prior*, consequently *superior* to him. 4thly, If this *divine nature* were begotten of the *Father*, then it must be in *time* ; i. e. there was a period in which it *did not* exist, and a period when it *began* to exist. This destroys the *eternity* of our blessed Lord, and robs him at once of his God-head. 5thly, To say that he was *begotten* from all *eternity*, is in my opinion, absurd ; and the phrase *eternal Son*, is a positive self-contradiction ; ETERNITY is that which has had no *beginning*, nor stands in any reference to *TIME*. Son supposes time, *generation*, and father ; and time also *unprecedented* to such generation. Therefore the conjunction of these two terms, *Son* and *eternity* is absolutely impossible, as they imply essentially different and opposite ideas."

before all things, and who made all things, must necessarily be the ETERNAL GOD.

The truth of this will be still more evident, if we observe that to Jesus are ascribed the proper names of God. *Jehovah* is a name ascribed to God, to the exclusion of all other beings. This name, which is peculiar to the most high God, is given to Christ. Jer. xxiii. 6. Isa. xl. 23—25. compared with Rom. xiv. 10—12. Isa. xl. 3. compared with Luke i. 76. and Isa. vi. 1, 9, 10. with John xii. 40, 41.

He is not only frequently called God, Matt. i. 23. John i. 1, 2. 1 Tim. iii. 16. but he is called the true God. 1 John v. 20, 21. the *great* and *Almighty* God, Tit. ii. 14. Isa. ix. 6.

In the Scriptures, the attributes, perfections, and properties, that are essential to the divine nature, are ascribed to our Lord Jesus Christ.

1. *Unbeginning existence*, or proper eternity, Mic. v. 2.—Christ speaking as the personal Wisdom of God, says, *I was set up from everlasting*, Prov. viii. 23.

2. *Omnipresence*—Matt. xxviii. 20. Matt. xviii. 20. Eph. iii. 17.

3. *Omniscience*—John ii. 24, 25. John xxi. 17.

4. *Omnipotence*—Phil. iii. 21.

5. *Immutability*—Heb. xiii. 8.

6. *All the divine perfections*—John xvi. 15.

Such are the divine perfections, which the sacred writers attribute to the Saviour of the World.

CHAP. IV.

Did ever a person appear so wonderful as Jesus Christ, in his actions and miracles? I am far from saying, that in the ages which preceded him, no extraordinary men appeared on earth, to whom the Lord seemed to have delegated his Omnipotence. In Egypt and in the desert, Moses

appeared the master of heaven and earth ; in the following ages Elijah came to present the same sight to men. But, when we narrowly examine their power itself, we find that all these miraculous men always bore with them the marks of dependence and weakness. Such is the Omnipotency of Jesus Christ, that his miracles bear no mark of dependence ; and, not satisfied with thereby shewing to us that he is equal to God, he also advertises us, that, whatever wonder is operated by his Father on the earth, he likewise operates ; and that his father's works are his.

Such was the conduct of our Saviour on earth, that the more narrowly it is examined, the more its sanctity is displayed. Some persons, if known, would be abhorred : others would decline upon acquaintance, and where intimacy does not reduce our esteem, it commonly diminishes our admiration. In many cases ignorance is the cause of wonder ; but as the character of the Saviour is perfect and infinite, the more we know of his attributes, and works, and ways, the more we shall admire and adore. The first disciples of our Saviour, who had it best in their power to know him, are the most affected with the innocence of his life ; and familiarity serves only to discover fresh matter of wonder. He speaks only the language of heaven ; he never answers but when his answers may be useful towards the salvation of those that interrogate him. Every grace that can recommend religion, and every virtue that can adorn humanity, are so blended, as to excite our admiration and engage our love. In abstaining from licentious pleasures, he was equally free from ostentatious singularity and churlish sullenness. When he complied with the established ceremonies of his countrymen, that compliance was not accompanied by any marks of bigotry or superstition ; when he opposed their rooted prepossessions, his opposition was perfectly exempt from the captious petulance of a controversialist, and the undistinguishing zeal of an innovator.—His courage was active in encountering the dangers to which he was exposed, and passive under the aggravated calamities which the malice of his foes heaped upon him : his fortitude was remote from every appearance of rashness,

and his patience was equally exempt from abject pusillanimity : he was firm without obstinacy, and humble without meanness. Though possessed of the most unbounded power, we behold him living continually in a state of voluntary humiliation and poverty ; we see him daily exposed to almost every species of want and distress ; afflicted without a comforter, persecuted without a protector ; and wandering about, according to his own pathetic complaint, because *he had not where to lay his head*. Though regardless of the pleasures, and sometimes destitute of the comfort of life, he never provokes our disgust by the sourness of the misanthrope, or our contempt by the inactivity of the recluse. His attention to the welfare of mankind was evidenced not only by his salutary injunctions, but by his readiness to embrace every opportunity of relieving their distress, and administering to their wants. In every period and circumstance of his life, we behold dignity and elevation blended with love and pity ; something, which, though it awakens our admiration, yet attracts our confidence. We see power, but it is power which is rather our security than our dread ; a power softened with tenderness, and soothing while it awes. With all the gentleness of a meek and lowly mind, we behold an heroic firmness which no terrors could restrain. In the private scenes of life, and in the public occupations of his ministry ; whether the object of admiration or ridicule, of love, or of persecution ; whether welcomed with hosannas, or insulted with anathemas, we still see him pursuing with unwearied constancy the same end, and preserving the same integrity of life and manners. His life was of the most perfect piety towards God, extensive benevolence, and tender compassion to men. He does not merely exhibit a life of strict justice, but of overflowing benignity. His temperance has not the dark shades of austerity ; his meekness does not degenerate into apathy ; his humility is signal, amidst a splendour of qualities more than human. His patience is invincible ; his resignation entire and absolute. Never was a character at the same time so commanding and natural, so resplendent and pleasing, so amiable and venerable.

Let us pursue him to the Mount, accompanied with two or three of his disciples, there we see his glory, impatient, if I dare say it, at having been hitherto held captive under the veil of humanity, openly burst forth : he appears all resplendent in light : the heavenly Father, then, declares to the astonished disciples, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*, and affixes no bounds to the homages they were to render him.

But let us from Mount Tabor repair to Mount Calvary ; that place, in which all the ignominy of the Son of Man was to be consummated, is not less, however, the theatre of his glory and divinity. All nature disorganized, confesses its author in him ; the stars which are hidden ; the dead who arise ; the stones of the tombs, which open of their own accord, and break in pieces ; the veil of the temple, which is rent from top to bottom ; even incredulity itself, which confesses him through the mouth of the Centurion ; all feel that it is not an ordinary man, and that things take place upon that Mount totally new and extraordinary.

A Sketch or Compendious view of the principal Christian Sects in the World.

WANT of moderation towards those who differ from us in religious opinions seems to be the most unaccountable thing in the world.

Bishop WATSON.

The word **SECT**, is a collective term comprehending all those who follow the tenets of some divine, philosopher, &c. It is now, however, invariably used to designate those who form separate communions and do not associate with one another in religious worship and ceremonies.

To delineate the nature, point out the foundation, and appreciate the tendency of every individual opinion, would be an endless task. My chief design is *very* briefly to enumerate the leading tenets of the several parties which attract our notice. And the name by which each of these parties is known, shall, for the accommodation of the reader, be alphabetically arranged.

1. **ANTINOMIANS**, (from anti *against*, and nomos the *law*) are those who maintain that the law is of no use under the gospel dispensation, or who hold doctrines that clearly supersede the necessity of good works.

2. **ARIANS**, the followers of Arius, who maintained that Jesus Christ was essentially, and totally distinct from the Father; that he was the first and noblest of those beings whom God had created, and the instrument by whom he formed the universe; that he was inferior to the Father both in nature and dignity, and that the Holy Ghost was not God, but created by the power of the Son. The Arians owned that the Son was the Word, but denied that word to have been eternal. The appellation of Arian has been indiscriminately applied, in more modern times, to all those who consider Jesus Christ as inferior and subordinate to the Father.

3. **ARMINIANS**. The principal tenets of the Arminians are comprehended in five articles, to which they add a

few of the arguments, they make use of in the defence of their sentiments.

1. That God from eternity, determined to bestow eternal salvation on all those who should believe in Jesus Christ, and persevere unto the end of their lives in this faith? and to inflict everlasting punishment on those who would continue in their unbelief and disobedience.

2. ' That Jesus Christ, by his sufferings and death, made an atonement for the sins of all mankind in general, and of every individual in particular.

3. That true faith cannot proceed from the exercise of our natural faculties and powers, since man, in consequence of his natural corruption, is incapable of any good; and that, therefore, it is necessary, in order to his salvation, that he be regenerated, by the operation of the Holy Ghost, which is the gift of God.

4. That this divine grace begins and perfects every thing that can be called good in man—that good works are not meritorious;—and that grace does not compel a man to act against his inclination, and may be rendered ineffectual by the perverse will of the impenitent sinner.

5. That God gives to the truly faithful, who are regenerated, the means of persevering in this state; but that the regenerate may lose their true faith, forfeit their state of grace, and die in their sins.

In order to support the truth of this system, they suppose that the following are a few, of the many arguments, which may be adduced for that purpose.

1st, That as the Deity is just, holy, and merciful, wise in all his counsels, and true in all his declarations to the sons of men, it is inconsistent with his attributes, by an antecedent decree, to fix our commission of so many sins, in such a manner that there is no possibility for us to avoid them. And it is dishonourable to God to believe, that he, by his revealed will, hath declared he would have all men to be saved; and yet, by an antecedent secret will, he would have the greatest part of them to perish. That he hath imposed a law upon them, which he requires them to obey, on penalty of his eternal displeasure, though he knows that

they cannot do it without his irresistible grace ; and yet he is absolutely determined to withhold this grace from them, and then punish them eternally for what they could not do without his divine assistance.

2d, They say that the Scriptures, in a variety of places, declare that Christ died for the whole world. John lii. 16, 17. 1 John ii. 2. Heb. ii. 9.

If Christ died for those who perish, and those who do not perish, he died for all. That he died for those who do not perish is confessed by all ; and if he died for *any* who may or shall perish, there is the same reason to affirm that he died for *all* who perish. Now that he died for such the scripture says expressly, in 1st Cor. viii. 11, *And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died.*

3. In support of the fourth article of their faith, they alledge, as far as it respects irresistible grace, that if conversion be wrought only by the infrustrable operation of God, and man is purely passive in it, vain are all the commands and exhortations to wicked men, *to turn from their evil ways, &c.* Isa. i. 16. Dient. x. 16. Eph. iv. 22 ; and divers other texts to the same purpose. Were an irresistible power necessary to the conversion of sinners, no man could be converted sooner than he is, because, before this irresistible action came upon him, he could not be converted ; and when it came upon him, he could not resist its operations : and therefore no man could reasonably be blamed, that he lived so long in an unconverted state.

4. They further think that the doctrine of a possibility of the final departure of true believers from the faith, is expressed in Heb. vi. 4, 5, 6 : also 2d. Pet. ii. 18—20, 21, 22, and divers other passages of scripture to the same purpose.

All commands to persevere and stand fast in the faith, shew, that there is a possibility that believers may not stand fast and persevere unto the end. All cautions to Christians not to fall from grace, are evidences and suppositions that they may fall. For what we have just reason to caution any person against, must be something which

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may come to pass. Now such caution Christ gives his disciples. Luke xxi. 34—36. To them who had like precious faith with the apostles, St. Peter saith, *Beware, &c.* 2 Pet. iii. 17.

Whitby, the celebrated commentator, has written a large and celebrated defence of Arminianism. Bishop Burnet has given a full account of the opinions of this sect, in his exposition of the seventeenth article. It is supposed, that by far the majority of the English clergy have taken this side of the question. (*f*)

5. BAPTISTS.—Baptists are those, who administer the ordinance of baptism by *immersion* only, instead of sprinkling. They contend that baptism ought not to be administered to infants or children at all, nor to grown persons in general; but to adults, who profess repentance for sin, and faith in Christ, and to them only. The baptists subdivide under two denominations, viz: 1st, The *particular*, who embrace Calvinistic principles, and who are the most numerous; and 2d, The *general*, who are Arminians in doctrine.

6. BAXTERIANS, so called from the learned and pious Mr. RICHARD BAXTER, who was born in the year 1615. I feel unwilling to deny myself the pleasure of giving a short account of his character. It has been said, that the learning and talents, the piety and labours, the writings and sufferings of the great and good Richard Baxter are known to all respectable divines; and while the English language continues, or eminent piety shall be venerable, his praise will live in the Churches. The late Rev. John Fletcher thought him the greatest divine that England ever produced, a learned cotemporary said of him, *that he could say*

(*f*) I have given the chief religious sentiments of the Arminians, nearly in the words of others who have written on the same subject. If I were obliged to give an opinion of my own, it would be very short:—Among those whom the world denominate Arminians, there is great diversity of sentiment; the opinions of some of these verge towards Socinianism; a number are Pelagians, while a very numerous majority strictly adhere to the doctrines of the Gospel, and are among the most strenuous contenders for the faith once delivered to the Saints. Pub.

what he would, and could prove what he said ; and the celebrated Dr. Barron declared, that his practical writings were never mended, and his controversial seldom confuted. He was a man famous for the strength of mind and weakness of body ; for preaching many sermons, writing many books, engaging in many controversies.

Mr. Baxter, and his followers strike into a middle path, between *Arminianism* and *Calvinism*, and their *endeavours* to unite both schemes. With the *Calvinist*, the Baxterian professes to believe, that a certain number determined upon in the Divine councils, will be *infallible* saved, and with the *Arminian* he joins in rejecting the doctrine of reprobation as absurd and impious, admits that Christ, in a certain sense died for all, and supposes that such a portion of grace is allotted to every man, as renders it his own fault if he does not attain eternal life.

7. **BROWNISTS**, were the followers of Robert Brown, a clergyman of the Church of England, who lived about the year 1600. He inveighed against the ceremonies and discipline of the church, separated himself from her communion and afterwards returned into her bosom. The Brownists maintained the discipline of the Church of England to be popish and anti christian, and all her ordinances and sacraments invalid. Hence they forbid their people to join with them in prayer, in hearing the word or any part of public worship. They not only renounced communion with the Church of England, but with all other churches, except such as were of the same model.

8. **CALVINISTS** are those who embrace the doctrines and sentiments of the celebrated reformer of the christian church, John Calvin. Originally, this appellation was given to those who adopted Calvin's views of ecclesiastical discipline as well as his doctrines ; but since the Synod of Dort, the name has been conferred on those who follow that reformer's views of the gospel, in order to distinguish them from the **ARMINIANS**. The distinguished theological tenets of Calvin, are : 1. Predestination. 2. Particular redemption. 3. Total depravity of man. 4. Effectual calling. And 5. The certain and final perseverance of

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the saints. CALVIN considered every church as a separate and independent body, invested with the power of legislation for itself. In France the Calvinists were denominated HUGONOTS. Calvinism subsists in the greatest purity in Geneva, where Calvin himself was the pastor of a church; and established his form of ecclesiastical discipline.

9. CONGREGATIONALISTS, a denomination of Protestants, who maintain that each particular church has authority from Christ for exercising government, and enjoying all the ordinances of worship within itself.

The platform of Church discipline, which was drawn up in 1648, and agreed upon by the elders and messengers, assembled in the Synod of Cambridge in New-England, defines a congregational church to be, by the institution of Christ, a part of the militant visible church, consisting of a company of saints by calling, united in one body by holy covenant, for the public worship of God, and the mutual edification of one another, in the fellowship of the Lord Jesus.

According to this platform, such as are admitted members of Churches ought to be first examined. For the Eunuch of Ethiopia, before his admission, was examined by Philip, whether he did believe in Jesus Christ with all his heart. The officers are charged with the keeping of the doors of the church, and therefore are, in a special manner, to make trial of the fitness of those who enter.

The qualifications necessary to be found in all members, are repentance for sin, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The confession of faith, that was agreed upon by the Synod, at their second session, teaches the doctrine of the Trinity, of predestination, total depravity, particular redemption, effectual grace, and final perseverance.

This denomination differs from the Independents in this respect, viz. : they invited councils which are advisory only; but the independents formerly decided all difficulties within themselves.

10. DUNKERS, a denomination which took its rise in the year 1724. It was founded by a German, who, weary of the world, retired to an agreeable solitude within fifty

miles of Philadelphia, for the more free exercise of religious contemplation. Curiosity attracted followers, and his simple and engaging manners made them proselytes. They soon settled a little colony called Euphrata, in allusion to the Hebrews, who used to sing psalms on the borders of the Euphrates. This denomination seem to have obtained their name from their baptising their new converts by plunging. They are also called Tumblers, from the manner in which they performed baptism, which is by putting the head of the person while kneeling first under water, so as to resemble the motion of the body in the action of tumbling.

Their habit seems to be peculiar to themselves, consisting of a long tunic, or a coat, reaching down to their heels, with a sash, or girdle, round the waists, and a cap, or hood, hanging from the shoulders like the dress of Dominican friars. The men do not shave the head or beard. The men and women have separate habitations and distinct apartments. For these purposes they have erected two large wooden buildings, one of which is occupied by the brethren, the other by the sisters of the society ; and in each of them there is a banqueting room, and an apartment for public worship : for the brethren and sisters do not meet together even at their devotions. They live chiefly upon roots and other vegetables ; the rules of their society not allowing them flesh, except upon particular occasions. The principal tenet of the Dunkers is, that future happiness is only to be obtained by penance and outward mortifications in this life ; and that as Jesus Christ, by his meritorious death became the Redeemer of mankind in general, so each individual of the human race, by a life of abstinence and restraint, may work out his own salvation. Nay, they go so far, as to admit of works of supererogation, and declare that a man may do much more than he is in justice obliged to do ; and that his superabundant works may therefore be applied to the salvation of others. They deny the eternity of future punishments ; and believe that the dead have the gospel preached unto them by our Saviour ; and that the souls of the just are employed in preaching the gospel

to those, who have had no revelation in this life. They deny the imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity. They disclaim violence even in cases of self-defence, and suffer themselves to be defrauded or wronged, rather than go to law.

Their church government and discipline are the same with the English baptists, except that every brother is allowed to speak in the congregation; and their best speaker is usually ordained to be the minister.

11. The EPISCOPALIANS, in the modern acceptation of the term, belong more especially to the Church of England, and derive this title from *Episcopus*, the Latin word for Bishop; or they are so called from *epi* and *skopeo*. They insist on the divine origin of bishops, and maintain that the bishops have superiority over the priests, *jure divino*, and directly from God; and they further insist on an alliance between church and state.

The sovereigns of England, ever since the reign of Henry the VIII, have been styled the *Supreme Heads of the Church*. The Church of England is governed by the King, who is the *Supreme Head*: by two Archbishops, and twenty four Bishops. The King has the right, according to the ecclesiastical establishment in England, to the nomination of Bishops. The two Archbishops are those of Canterbury and York, who are both dignified with the address of *Your Grace*. The former is first Peer of the Realm, as well as metropolitan of the English Church. He is enabled to hold ecclesiastical courts upon all affairs, which were formerly cognizable in the Court of Rome, when not repugnant to the King's prerogative. The Bishops are addressed by the appellation of *Your Lordships*, styled, *Right Reverend Fathers in God*, and take the precedence of all temporal barons.

The benefices of the bishops were converted by William the Conqueror, into temporal baronies; so that every prelate has a seat, and vote in the House of Peers.(g) Dr.

(g) There is a Bishop of Sodor and Man, who has no seat in the House of Peers.

Benjamin Hoadley, however, in a sermon preached from this text, *my kingdom is not of this world*, insisted that the Clergy had no pretensions to temporal jurisdictions, which gave rise to various publications, termed by way of eminence the *Bangorian Controversy*, for Hoadley was then Bishop of Bangor.

The Church of England broke off from the Church of Rome, in the time of Henry the VIII. In earlier life, and during the earlier part of his reign, Henry was a bigotted papist, burnt WILLIAM TYNDAL, who made one of the first and best translations of the New Testament, and wrote fiercely in defence of the Seven Sacraments, against Luther, for which the Pope honoured him with the title of *The Defender of the Faith*. This title is retained by the Kings of England to the present day.

The Church of England has *thirty nine* articles, which were established in the reign of Queen Elizabeth. They are to be found in most *common prayer books*; and the Episcopal Church in America has reduced their number to 20. By many, these articles are made to speak in favour of Arminianism, and by some they have been interpreted in favour of Calvinism.

In the public offices of the Church of England, three Creeds are used; the *Apostolical, Athanasian, and Nicene creed*. Subscription to them is required of all the established clergy; and of all the dissenting teachers by the toleration act, but from this they were relieved by 19 Geo. 3d. Several articles of faith contained in these creeds, which were formerly considered as too sacred to be opposed, are now publicly controverted, particularly the doctrine of the Trinity. Places of worship have been established, in which that doctrine has been openly renounced; and several clergymen have thrown up valuable livings in the church, and assigned their disbelief of that doctrine as the motive of their conduct.

It is by no means certain that all the clergy of the Church of England believe all the doctrines contained in these creeds, especially the Athanasian creed has been thought objectionable, *Archbishop TILLOTSON*, one of the greatest

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ornaments the Church of England ever had, says, "I wish we were well rid of it." Though a man may believe the doctrine of the Trinity, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures, yet it is hard openly and explicitly to send to the devil; all who cannot receive the *Athanasian* illustration of it. Some make their minds tolerably easy under the damnatory close of the *Athanasian* creed, by omitting to read it at the times appointed. But, to all persons, this is not perfectly satisfactory; because the clergy of the established Church of England, solemnly declare and subscribe their names before the bishop, that they will conform to the liturgy of the Church of England as by law established. Now every time they omit to read the said creed, or any other part of the service of the church, when appointed by law to be read, they are guilty of a breach of engagement. So that, whether they read the creed in question, or neglect to read it, they are culpable, if they do not *ex animo* approve of it.

It is true, according to the celebrated Dr. PALEY, subscription may be justified without the actual belief of each of the *articles*. But, on this point the articles speak for themselves. Why is an article continued in its place if it be not meant to be *believed*? If *one* may be signed without being believed why not *all*? By what criterion are we to distinguish those that may be subscribed by a person who thinks them false, from those which may not? Is not the present mode of subscription virtually the same as if each article were separately offered to the subscriber? No circumstance could have a more direct tendency to ensnare the consciences of the *Clergy*; no circumstance could afford the enemies of the established church a more advantageous occasion of charging her ministers with insincerity, than the admission of the opinion, that the articles may safely be subscribed without a conviction of their truth, taken severally as well as collectively. That opinion I have seen maintained by writers of inferior note, but I could not without particular surprize, behold it avowed by a writer of such authority as Dr. PALEY.

12. HUGONOTS. This appellation was given to the French Protestants in 1561. The term is, by some, sup-

posed to be derived from a gate in Tours, called Hugon, where they first assembled ; according to others it is taken from their original protest or confession of faith ; *but nos venimus*, &c. During the reign of Charles the IX, and the 24th August, 1572, happened the massacre of St. Bartholomew, when 70,000 Protestants throughout France were butchered, with circumstances of aggravated cruelty.

13. HUTCHINSONIANS, so called from the late John Hutchinson, Esq. who was born in 1674. The Hutchinsonians maintain, that the great mystery of the Trinity is conveyed to our understandings by ideas of sense ; and that the created substance of the air, or heaven, in its three-fold agency of fire, light, and spirit, is the enigma of the one essence, or one Jehovah in three persons. The unity of essence is exhibited by its unity of substance ; the trinity of persons by its trinity of conditions, fire, light and spirit. Thus the one substance of the air, or heaven in three conditions, shews the unity in trinity ; and its three conditions, in, or of one substance, the trinity in unity.

14. INDEPENDANTS, deny not only the subordination of the clergy, but also all dependency on other assemblies. Every congregation, they affirm, has in itself what is necessary for its own government, and is not subject to other churches or to their deputies. Thus this independency of one church with respect to another, has given rise to the appellation, *independents*. (*See Congregationalists.*)

15. LUTHERANS, are the followers of the illustrious reformer, Dr. Martin Luther, with regard to religion.—The Lutherans, are of all protestants, said to differ least from the Romish Church ; as they affirm the real presence of Christ in the sacrament ; and that the use of images in the churches,—private confession of sins,—the use of wafers in the Lord's Supper,—exorcisms in baptism,—and similar rites are not only tolerable, but some of them are useful. They further hold, that the divine decrees respect the salvation or misery of men, in consequence of a previous knowledge of their sentiments and characters, and not as free and unconditional, and as founded on the mere will of God. But from these views the Lutherans began to

relax about the middle of the 17th century, and their public teachers are now at liberty, to dissent from the decisions of those creeds, or symbols, which were formerly deemed almost infallible rules of faith and practice.

16. **METHODISTS.** The Methodists form a very large part of the christian world. They sprang up at Oxford not quite a century ago : it was an appellation given to a few young students in consequence of their rigid adherence to study, and the manner in which they employed their time generally.

The Character of the founder of the Methodists.

This venerable man, the Rev. JOHN WESLEY, in his indefatigable zeal in the discharge of his duty, has been long witnessed by the world ; but, as mankind are not always inclined to put a generous construction on the exertion of singular talents, his motives were imputed to the love of popularity, ambition, and lucre. It now appears that he was actuated by a disinterested regard to the immortal interest of mankind. He laboured, and studied, and wrote, and preached to propagate what he believed to be the Gospel of Christ.

He had every help which education could give him.—He was perfect in those ancient languages in which the holy scriptures were originally written, and particularly so in *Greek*, the original language of the New Testament.—This, as a tutor, he taught many years at Oxford, and, it seems, Hebrew also, if not publicly and professionally, at least to some individuals in private. For we find the Rev. Jas. Hervey, in one of his letters to him, thanking him, as for many other favours, so especially “for teaching him Hebrew.” He understood most of the modern languages. In *Logic* he excelled. He was well skilled in *natural Philosophy*, as his many volumes published on that subject shew, and was an accurate *Historian*. In *Mathematics* he was well versed. As to *Divinity*, his numerous writings shew

how much he studied and how well he understood that subject. He was qualified to excel in every branch of literature; he was versed not only in languages and logic, but in metaphysics, in oratory, in criticism; his preaching was pathetic, and persuasive; his style was nervous, clear, and manly; his journals are artless and interesting; his compositions and compilations to promote knowledge and piety were almost innumerable.

Had he loved wealth, he might have accumulated without bounds; had he been fond of power, his influence would have been worth courting by any party. I do not say he was without ambition; he had that at which christianity need not blush, and which virtue is proud to confess. I do not say that which is gratified by splendour and large possessions; but that which commands the hearts and affections, the homage and gratitude of thousands.—For him they felt sentiments of veneration only inferior to those which they paid to heaven; to him they looked as their father, their benefactor, their guide to glory and immortality; for him they fell prostrate before God, with prayers and tears to spare his doom, and prolong his stay. Such a recompence as this is sufficient to repay the toils of the longest life. Short of *this* greatness is contemptible impotence. Before this, lofty prelates bow, and princes hide their diminished heads.

After surviving almost all his adversaries, and acquiring respect among those who were the most distant from him in principles, he lived to see the plant he had reared spreading its branches far and wide.

Doctrines of the Methodists.

So little can be said on this subject here, that it may appear improper to mention it, but I am unwilling to pass it by in silence.

The Methodists believe, concerning God and his attributes, that there is *one* God; that his existence is from everlasting to everlasting; that God is a spirit; that he

is present in every place ; knows every thing : is almighty in power ; true and faithful ; pure and holy ; perfectly just ; and yet unspeakably merciful. They believe further, that in the Unity of the Godhead, there are three Persons, of one substance, power, and eternal existence. *The Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost.* They believe that God created the world, visible and invisible, together with angels, men, and every thing that is, and hath life. They believe in the total depravity of human nature ; and that man cannot be restored from his fall, and enjoy pardon, adoption, holiness, and heaven, but in and through Jesus Christ ; that through his living, suffering, dying, rising again, ascending into heaven, and there ever living to make intercession for us, salvation is offered to, and attainable by *all*.

The Methodists believe, that although salvation is attainable by all, yet that none will be saved but those who comply with the terms of salvation, as expressed in the holy scriptures. The Methodists believe that all who comply with these terms receive the blessings of pardon, justification, &c. &c.

The Methodists believe, that the will of God is our sanctification, and that the design of Christ in our redemption is universal holiness. They believe, that in all the foregoing articles, they have drawn their opinions from the *word of God*, which they have declared to be *the only and sufficient rule, both of their faith and practice.* They believe, that the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments contain all things necessary to salvation : so that whatsoever is not found therein, or cannot be proved thereby, ought not to be imposed upon any man as an article of faith, nor to be thought necessary to salvation.

THE NUMBERS IN THE METHODIST SOCIETIES, AS PUBLISHED IN 1816 :

In Great-Britain,	191,699
Ireland,	28,542

In France,	55
At Brussels,	10
Gibraltar,	63
Sierre Leone,	129
The Cape of Good Hope,	42
In Ceylon,	56
The West-Indies,	15,938
Nova-Scotia, &c.	1,824
Total number of Members under the care of the British and Irish Conferences, }	241,319
Number of Members in the United States of America, in 1815,	
Whites,	167,976
Blacks,	43,187
Total,	211,165

Total number Members in the Methodist
Societies throughout the World, 452,484

It will occur to those who have any knowledge of the discipline of the Methodists, that the above numbers, compose but a very small part of their regular hearers.

As to the success of the Methodists in doing good, it is evident that no people have done more to moralize mankind than they; nor have they rested there: they have not only contributed to render thousands better members of society, but being instrumental in promoting their spiritual and eternal welfare. (*See History of Methodism; Coke's life of Wesley; Macgowan's shaver; Wesley's Works; Growther's Portraiture of Methodism, second edition, &c. &c.*)

17. MILLENARIANS, a name given to those in the primitive ages who believe that the saints will reign with Christ on earth a thousand years after the first resurrection, before the final completion of beatitude. This appella-

tion is of Latin original. The antient Mellenarians held that, after the coming of Antichrist, and the destruction of all nations, which should follow, there shall be a first resurrection of the just alone—that all who shall be found upon earth, both good and bad, shall continue alive; the good to obey the just that are risen, as their princes; the bad to be conquered by the just and to be subject unto them;—that Jesus Christ will then descend from heaven in his glory—that the city of Jerusalem will be rebuilt, enlarged, embellished, and its gates stand open night and day.

18. MORAVIANS, are supposed to have arisen under Nicholas Lewis, Count of Zinzendorf, a German nobleman who died in 1760. The followers of count Zinzendorf are called Moravians, because the first converts to this system were some Moravian families. The society themselves however assert, that they are descended from the old Moravian and Bohemian brethren, who existed as a distinct sect sixty years prior to the reformation. They also style themselves the *Unitas Fratrum*, or united brethren; and in general profess to adhere to the Augsburg confession of faith.

The *Moravians* have astonished the world by their humility, zeal, and patient endurance of hardships, as well as by their ministerial labours; so that, as one observes, they have done much,

To plant the *Tree of Life* in fields of ice,
And make it flourish in eternal snow.

The frigid and the torrid zones exhibit the fruits of their labours.

19. MYSTICS. This denomination derive their name from maintaining, that the scriptures have a mystic sense, which must be sought after, in order to understand their true import. Of this sect there have been many singular characters, especially Madame Bourignon, a French lady. Fenelon, the amiable Archbishop of Cambray, favoured the sentiments of this female devotee, for which he was severely reprimanded by the Pope. The mystics suppose that certain passages of scripture have three mystical senses. Thus, according to them, the passage in Genesis,

Let there be light, and there was light, which is, according to the letter, corporeal light; signifies *allegorically*, the Messiah, *morally*, grace, and *anagogically*, or *mysteriously*, beauty, or the light of glory.

20. **QUAKERS**, a religious sect that arose during the interregnum, and founded by George Fox, who, being brought before two justices in Derbyshire, one of them scoffing at him for having bidden him, and those about him tremble at the word of the Lord, occasioned the imputation of *Quakers*, an appellation which soon became and has remained the most usual denomination; but they themselves adopted, and have transmitted to us, the endearing appellation of *Friends*. It is difficult to give a specific statement of their tenets, but they may be found in a well written apology by Robert Barclay, a learned quaker, who died in Scotland, 1690.

21. **SANDEMANIANS**, a modern sect that originated in Scotland, about the year 1728, and were first called *Glassites* from John Glass, their founder, afterwards by their present name, in 1755, from Mr. Robert Sandeman, who wrote in favour of their principles. Their opinions and practices chiefly consists in, their weekly administration of the Lord's supper; their love-feasts, of which every member is required to partake; their kiss of charity, used on this occasion; their weekly collections before the Lord's supper for the support of the poor, and other expences; mutual exhortation; abstinence from blood and things strangled; washing each others feet, which they understand as a literal precept, &c. They maintain a plurality of elders, pastors, or bishops, in each church.—In discipline they are very strict and severe. They are not, at present, a very numerous sect, and differ from most other christians concerning faith, which they deem a simple assent, and not a justifying faith. (See *Glas's Testimony of the king of Martyrs*; *Sandeman's Letters on Theron and Aspasio*, Letter II; *Backus's Discourse on Faith and its Influence*, P. 730; *Adams's view of Religions*; *Bellamy's Nature and Glory of the Gospel*, Lon. ed. notes, P. 65—

125; *Hist. of Dis. Church*, p. 265. v. i.; *Fuller's Letters on Sandemanianism*.

22. **SABBATARIANS**, are a body of christians who keep the seventh day sabbath, and are to be found principally, if not wholly, among the Baptists, both in England and the States of America.

23. The **SHAKERS**, instituted in 1774, are the followers of one Anna Leese, whom they style the elect Lady, and the mother of all the Elect. They say she is the woman mentioned in the 12 Chap. of the Revelations, can speak seventy two tongues and converse with the dead; though these tongues are unintelligible to the living.—This sect is peculiar to America. Their enthusiasm is vented in jumping, dancing, and other violent exertions of the body, which bringing on *shaking*, they are termed shakers. This dancing, they say, denotes their victory over sin. Their most favourite exercise is turning round for an hour or two, which, in their opinion, shews the great power of God. The tenets which peculiarly distinguish this denomination are comprised in seven articles. 1, That the resurrection is already come, and now is the time to judge ourselves; and this resurrection is an entirely new dispensation, in which the people of God are not to be guided by the written word, but by the immediate influences of the Holy Ghost. 2, That they have power to heal the sick, raise the dead, and cast out devils. 3, That they have a correspondence with angels, the spirits of the saints, and their departed friends. 4, That they speak with divers kinds of tongues in their public assemblies. 5, That it is lawful to practice vocal music, with dancing in the christian churches, if it be practised in praising the Lord. 6, That they being the children of the resurrection, must neither marry nor be given in marriage. 7, That the word *everlasting*, when applied to the punishment of the wicked, refers only to a limited space of time, except in the case of those who fall from their church. This denomination maintain that it is unlawful to swear, game, or use compliments to each other; and that water-baptism and the Lord's supper are abolished. They deny the imputation

of Adam's sin to posterity, and the doctrine of election and reprobation.

24. **SOCINIANS** derive their name from Faustus Socinus, a native of Sienna, in Italy; who, about the year 1574, began to divulge his opinions, and, who died in Poland, 1604. There were two who bore the name of Socinus, uncle and nephew, and both disseminated the same doctrine. The Socinians assert, that Christ had no existence until born of the Virgin Mary, and that being a man like ourselves, though endowed with a large portion of the Divine wisdom, the only objects of his mission were to teach the efficacy of repentance without an atonement, as a medium of the Divine favour—to exhibit an example for our imitation; to seal his doctrine with his blood, and in his resurrection from the dead, to indicate the certainty of our resurrection at the last day. Between ancient and modern Socinians, however, a considerable difference obtains. The miraculous conception and the worship of Christ, both allowed by Socinus, are rejected by most of the modern Socinians.

25. **SWEDENBORGIAN**s are the followers of Emanuel Swedenborg, a Swedish nobleman, who died in London, 1772. He professed himself to be the founder (under the Lord) of the *New Jerusalem Church*, alluding to the New Jerusalem, spoken of in the Book of the Revelation of St. John. Those who wish more information on this article, may consult a number of publications, which have been written on the subject.

26. **TRINITARIANS** are those who believe the doctrine of the Trinity, by which is generally understood, that there are three distinct persons in the undivided Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. The word *Trinity* is not to be found in the Bible, but is a scholastic term, derived from the Latin word *Trinitas*, denoting a three-fold unity.

The following works on the Trinity may be profitably consulted, viz. :

Hare's Preservative against the errors of Socinianism; Wesley's pieces on the subject; Watts, Jones, S. Brown,

Fawcett, Simpson, Bull's Defensio Fidei Nicana ; Display of the Trinity, by a Layman ; Scott's Essays ; Wood's Letter to the Rev. John Grundy, and many others.

27. UNITARIANS, are those who confine the glory and attributes of the Divinity to the Father, not allowing it to the Son or Holy Spirit. See SOCINIANS.

28. UNIVERSALISTS, properly so called, are those who believe, that Christ died for all, so before he shall have delivered up his mediatorial kingdom to the Father, all shall be brought to a participation of the benefits of his death in their restoration to holiness and happiness. They teach that the righteous shall have part in the first resurrection, shall be blessed and happy with Christ in his millennial kingdom; that over them the second death shall have no power; that the wicked shall receive a punishment apportioned to their crimes, that punishment itself is a mediatorial work, and founded upon mercy, consequently it is a means of humbling, subduing, and finally reconciling the sinner to God.

Romish Church.

29. It may be useful, in this place, to say a few words concerning the origin of the word *Church*, and to shew how improperly the phrase, *The Church*, is assumed by the Roman Catholics, so called. In primitive times, before Christians had any stated *buildings*, they worshipped in *private houses*; the people that had been converted to God, meeting together in some dwelling house of a fellow convert, more convenient and capacious than the rest; hence *the Church that was in the house of Aquila and Priscilla*, Rom. xvi. 3—5. and *1 Cor. xvi. 19.* and *the Church that was in the house of Nymphas*, Col. iv. 15. Now, as these houses were dedicated to the worship of God, each was termed *kuriou oikos*, the *house of the Lord*; which word in process of time, became contracted into *kuriok* and *kuriake*, and hence the word *kirk* among the people of Scotland, and *kirik*, among our Saxon ancestors, from which by corruption, changing the hard Saxon *c* into *ch*, we have made the word *church*.

In the proper use of this word there can be no such thing as *THE Church*, exclusively—there may be *A Church*, and *the CHURCHES*, signifying a *particular* congregation, or the different assemblies of religious people. The Church of Christ on earth, consisting of all parties wheresoever found, who maintain the truth as it is in Jesus, may properly enough be termed *Catholic*; hence the absurdity of applying the term *catholic*, which signifies *universal*, to that *very small* portion of it, the Church of Rome. The Church of Rome, by applying this term exclusively to itself, abuses the term, and acts as ridiculously, as it does absurdly.—The term *Church* is very properly defined in the 19th article of the Church of England;—which see.

The word *pope* is derived from the Greek *Pappas*, which signifies *a father*. Hence he is styled the father of the church. This pontiff is likewise called the Vicar of Jesus Christ, the visible head of the church, and the successor of St. Peter, and a great many other titles, too numerous to be detailed. He wears the keys as an emblem of his power, to open the gates of heaven. And he wears the triple crown, to inform the christian world that he is constituted with spiritual jurisdiction over priests, emperors, and kings, as well as every person beside. This denomination supposes that the bishops of Rome are the descendents of St. Peter, and in that quality have from the beginning exercised jurisdiction over the churches. The principal points which distinguish the papists from the protestants are, 1. That St. Peter was designed by Christ to be the head of the church; and the bishops of Rome being his successors, have the same apostolic authority.

2. That the Roman Catholic Church is the mother and mistress of all churches, and cannot possibly err in matters of faith.

3. That the Scriptures are not sufficient without tradition, and that apostolic traditions are of equal authority with the Scriptures.

4. That there are seven sacraments, and that all of them confer grace.

5. That in mass there is offered unto God a true and propitiatory sacrifice for the quick and the dead ; and that in the sacrament of the eucharist, under the forms of bread and wine, is really and substantially present the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ.

6. That there is a purgatory ; and that souls kept in prison receive help by the suffrages of the faithful.

7. That the saints reigning with Christ are to be honoured and invoked, and that they offer prayers unto God for us ; and their relics are to be had in veneration.

8. That the images of Christ, of the blessed Virgin, the MOTHER OF GOD, and of other Saints, ought to be retained in the churches ; and honour and veneration ought to be given them.

9. That the power of indulgences was left by Christ to the church, and that the use of them is very beneficial.

Some of the Ceremonies of the Church of Rome.

1.—They make use of the sign of the cross in all their sacraments. 2, Sprinkling holy water by the priest, on solemn days, is used by every one coming in or going out of the church. 3, The ceremony of blessing bells is called christening them ; because the name of some Saint is ascribed to them, by virtue of whose invocation they are presented, in order that they may obtain his favour and protection. 4. They have a custom of bowing at the name of Jesus. 5. They keep a number of lamps and wax candles continually burning before the shrines and images of the Saints. 6, They make use of incense, and have lighted candles upon the altar at the celebration of the mass, &c. &c.

30. PROTESTANT CHURCH. Protestants, a name given in Germany to those who adhered to the doctrines of Luther ; because, in 1529, they protested against the decree of Charles the V. and the Diet of Spire, declaring that they appealed to a general council. The same name is now become a common denomination for a variety of sects which differ from the Church of Rome.

31. **GREEK CHURCH.** The Greek or Russian church, is very ancient, and bears a considerable resemblance to the Church of Rome. Denying, however, the infallibility and supremacy of the Pope, they are in communion with the Patriarch of Constantinople. Amongst other articles of belief, they are distinguished for these three. 1, The rejection of images. 2, The doctrine of consubstantiation. 3, The administration of Baptism, by immersing the whole body in water.

Through inadvertance the Presbyterians, Seceders, and Relief, were not mentioned in their proper place.

32. The members of the Kirk of Scotland are strictly speaking the only PRESBYTERIANS in Great-Britain.— Their mode of ecclesiastical government was brought thither from Geneva by John Knox.

Contrary to the Episcopalians, the Presbyterians maintain that the church should be governed by Presbyteries, Synods, and general Assemblies. The title Presbyterian comes from the Greek word *Presbuteros*, which signifies senior or elder. In the Kirk of Scotland there are fifteen Synods, and sixty-nine Presbyteries. Their doctrine is Calvinistic, though some of their most popular preachers, scarcely ever introduce into their sermons, the peculiarities of Calvinism.

33. **SECEDERS.** Dissenters from the kirk of Scotland, call themselves *Seceders*, for as the term *Dissenter* came from the Latin word *dissentio*, to differ, so the appellation *Seceder* is derived from another Latin word *secedo*, to separate or withdraw from any body of men with which we may have been united. The Seceders are rigid Calvinists, and severe in their discipline. Through a difference as to civil matters they are broken down into *Burghers* and *Anti-burghers*. Of these two classes, the latter are most confined in their sentiments, and associate therefore the least with any other body of christians. The *Seceders* originated under Ralph and Ebenezer Erskine, about the year 1730.

34. **RELIEF.** The only difference between the established church of Scotland and the Relief, is, that the latter chose their own pastors.

ADVERTISEMENT.

"The proper end of every instructive composition, is to illuminate, and the small taper, which gives us light to read by, is preferable to the blazing meteor of the sky, which raises astonishment, but soon leaves us in darkness."

I HAVE now brought this small work to its conclusion, and send it to the Public not without a degree of anxiety. I am far from being pleased with the work itself, though perfectly satisfied with the purity of my motives, and the simplicity of my intention. And indeed upon the plan which I have found it necessary to adopt, defects are unavoidable: the perpetual study to be as concise as possible, has made the work in several instances defective, and in a few incorrect. Whatever errors may be observed, must, in general, be attributed to my scantiness of knowledge, when compared with the information necessary for the tolerable perfection of the manual now submitted to the candid reader's perusal. But I am fully of opinion, that some allowances will be made for my youth and inexperience, especially as I write professedly for the ignorant, and not for men of learning; to them I would look for instruction, and esteem it a privilege to sit at their feet and receive lessons of wisdom.

Perhaps it may be said, that this work is tinctured too much with my own sentiments. I may be permitted to say, in answer to this, that honesty made it necessary for me to assert what I believed to be true. Yet notwithstanding this declaration, the features of bigotry, are so far from being prominent in this work, that they will not, I think, be easily, if at all, discernible. And when I have ventured to express my own opinion, on subjects concerning which men of learning and experience have differed, I hope the candid will allow that I have not transgressed the bounds of modesty.

In describing the principal denominations of Christians, my limits would not enable me to do all the justice that I intended to do. Perhaps some will suppose, that here the marks of partiality are very visible. In reply, it may be deemed sufficient to say, that I have not intentionally lost sight of that fundamental principle of morality, "we should do unto others as we could reasonably desire others to do to us."—To conclude, I am fully aware, that though even a Paul were to plant, and Apollos water, it is God *alone* that giveth the increase.

ERRATA.

The title page ; read **A** Theoligical, &c.

In the Preface ; read oscitancy, inseed of ascitancy.

Page 1st ; read beneficent, instead of beneficent.

Page 2d ; read Genesis, instead of Genisis.

Page 5th ; read moveable, instead of movable.

Page 8th ; read fictions, instead of fictitious.

Do. Do. read rites, instead of rights.

Page 9th ; read mark, instead of work.

Page 10th ; read denominate, instead of denominare.

Page 12th ; read inseparable, instead of inseperable.

Page 34th ; read Castalian, instead of astalian.

Page 52d ; after Creator, add *be*.

Do. Do. read surrounding, instead of serrounding.

Page 108th ; read indivisibly, instead of individually.

Page 109th ; read an, instead of on.

Page 111th ; read His, instead of This.

Page 122d ; in the word transubstantiation, leave out the 2d s.

Page 123d ; read sonship, instead of worship.

[There are several other errata, which have been occasioned principally by the rapidity with which the work has gone through the press, and which the candid reader is requested to correct.]

e.
e.
y.

at the 2d s.

occasioned
ne through
correct.]